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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 21st meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 9 November 2015, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Bowler (Malawi)

Contents**Agenda item 54: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East****This record is subject to correction.**Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 54: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(A/70/13, A/70/13/Add.1, A/70/379, A/70/308, A/70/340 and A/70/319)

1. **The Chair** said that the international community should be proud of UNRWA's success in providing quality education, resulting in high literacy rates, and medical services, reducing infant mortality rates and the incidence of communicable diseases, as well as its humanitarian and development programmes, which had helped many Palestine refugees rise above poverty. The Agency had also been invaluable in providing a sense of hope and dignity for that vulnerable community.
2. That summer, half a million Palestine refugee children in the Middle East had faced the prospect of losing their right to education because of UNRWA's funding crisis. The international community needed to intensify its efforts to prevent a similar financial crisis from arising in the future. Emphasizing that the Agency depended on the Organization's support to fulfil its mandate, and that Member States had a responsibility to support it at a time when the Middle East was in crisis, he said that it was crucial that the Agency should continue to operate until a just and lasting solution was found to the question of Palestine refugees.
3. **Mr. Krähenbühl** (Commissioner-General of UNRWA) said that one year after the deadly war in Gaza, Palestine refugees regrettably felt more abandoned than ever. Their vulnerability and isolation had reached levels not seen in generations, as expanding conflicts in the Middle East thrust one community after another into extreme insecurity. The current situation had created a new existential crisis for Palestine refugees, many of whom had already been subjected to severe inequalities and discrimination. Where possible, some chose to flee, joining the refugee exodus across the region and into Europe.
4. Given those conditions, the social and economic development gains achieved over decades in the greater Middle East were very much at risk. A relationship must be established among the Palestine refugees, UNRWA and the recently-adopted Sustainable Development Goals. With their governance and justice provisions, the Goals aspired beyond the foreseeable future of refugees, as long as they

remained casualties of an unresolved conflict that had violated their fundamental rights with no means of redress. However, Palestine had already achieved much with regard to the human-development commitments enshrined in the Goals, and particularly the Goal that every child must benefit from a quality, inclusive education.

5. Education had been at the core of UNRWA's mandate since its inception, providing the foundation for the successful development of Palestine refugees' human capital. The international community must collaborate in taking all necessary steps to preserve and build on those achievements until a just and lasting solution was realized.

6. That summer, UNRWA's flagship education programme for 500,000 Palestine refugee schoolchildren and vocational training for 7,000 youth had been under threat of indefinite suspension owing to a lack of funding. Postponing the opening of the Agency's schools would have jeopardized achievement of a core Sustainable Development Goal, denying those children their right to education and sending shock waves through the entire Palestine refugee community. In the current Middle East context, that outcome would have posed a threat to regional security.

7. Faced with a crippling funding shortfall, UNRWA's management had been compelled to take urgent, painful measures to curtail planned expenditures. As set forth in the August 2015 Special Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East on the Financial Crisis of the Agency (A/70/272), those measures included a hiring freeze, higher student-per-classroom ceiling, 85 per cent reduction of international consultancies and short-term contracts, and an exceptional voluntary separation package for staff.

8. Bridging the shortfall had also required the active support of external stakeholders. Under the exceptional resource-mobilization effort led by UNRWA, the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, along with the strong support of the Jordanian Government, including its Minister of Foreign Affairs, and that of the Palestinian President and Prime Minister, the required \$101 million had been raised to enable UNRWA's schools to re-open on time. Half of the funds had been donated by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. He expressed his

gratitude to all the donors who had contributed to that effort and all the Agency's donors and host countries which, together, ensured that its core services would be delivered in 2015.

9. The events of summer 2015 were a warning to the international community that it must take serious steps as part of a collective effort to ensure that the Agency was placed on a more sustainable financial foundation in the future.

10. UNRWA had not hesitated to take on responsibility in order to ensure sustainability, and would introduce additional measures to control costs while maximizing the impact of its modest resources. He had instructed its senior managers to prioritize activities directly related to service delivery and ensure that support functions were streamlined and their budgets compressed Agency-wide. Under the Deputy Commissioner-General's robust direction, that approach had guided the preparation of the Agency's 2016 budget, which would be the first to benefit from a new enterprise resource system. Exposure to currency-exchange risks would also be reduced by enhancing hedging strategies, supported by a new advisory committee of external experts.

11. UNRWA's projected budget shortfall for 2016 had been reduced to \$81 million, resulting in unprecedented savings of over \$50 million while sustaining a zero-growth programme budget. Those and other measures were being developed to lower the costs of doing business while maintaining — and, wherever possible, improving — the Agency's performance and refugees' access to services. UNRWA would continue to measure programme results against the targets set forth in its medium-term strategy for 2016-2021.

12. Even so, additional resources would be required to compensate for the projected shortfall. The Agency recognized that its traditional donors expected it to be innovative in developing new sources of funding, potentially including World Bank Trust Funds for education, Islamic finance tools such as *zakat*, *waqf* and social bonds, private-public partnerships and other sources of private-sector income, and philanthropic giving. The Agency hoped its pilot project would be among the first to demonstrate the potential of Islamic *zakat* financing at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016.

13. While seeking new funding opportunities, the Agency still urgently needed the support of donors to open new funding sources such as the World Bank; funding must still be undergirded by Member States, from which it needed consolidated, predictable and multi-year commitments. He underlined the importance of consolidating recent efforts by Gulf State donors and ensuring, whenever possible, that donors at least maintained previous funding commitments.

14. Strengthening UNRWA's financial viability was a collective responsibility. Its staff and management must implement strategic operational and financial plans in accordance with its medium-term strategy for 2016-2021. Host countries must continue to support and show generosity towards Palestine refugees and protect their rights, which give those refugees the best prospect of a better future.

15. With a sprawling infrastructure of 685 schools in almost 60 refugee camps and towns throughout its area of operation, the scale of UNRWA's education programme was partially to blame for the 2015 financial crisis.

16. The conflict in Syria had devastated UNRWA's education system. Forty-nine of its 118 schools had been damaged since 2011 and only 42 remained operational. While approximately 66,000 students had regularly attended its schools prior to the conflict, that number currently totalled 45,000 and was subject to security conditions. Eleven of the fourteen UNRWA staff killed during that conflict were from the Agency's education programme. His delegation condemned in the strongest terms the wanton violation of the rights of children and all civilians.

17. Earlier that year in Lebanon, an armed extremist group staging attacks on other factions took over an UNRWA school in the Ein el-Hilweh camp, departing only after mediation by prominent figures in the camps. Schools in Lebanon continued to be affected by factional violence, with serious implications for Palestine refugees. During the summer 2015 hostilities in Gaza, 83 schools had been damaged, including 7 schools serving as emergency shelters. At the peak of displacement, 90 UNRWA schools had sheltered 300,000 persons — approximately 17 per cent of the total Gazan population.

18. On recent visits to conflict-stricken Palestine refugee communities, he had seen the essential role played by the Agency's education system in the

regional-conflict dynamic. In the Yarmouk camp in March 2015, parents who had survived two years of a merciless siege had spoken to him only briefly about their own survival needs before bringing up their children's education. Where the combined forces of violence, dispersion and unmet basic needs fuelled refugee flows beyond the Middle East, UNRWA's institutional presence offered a stable space in which Palestine refugees could nourish their determination and strength, adapt to what many hoped was a temporary displacement and begin to rebuild their lives. Those refugees would help their shattered communities recover after the conflict was brought to an end.

19. Education was undoubtedly an essential source of hope and strength for Palestinian youth, who were so often deprived of opportunity and rights. Safeguarding their access to education remained crucial to preventing radicalization and preserving the prospect of a better future. The Agency's human-rights curriculum exposed Palestinian boys and girls to the importance of respecting the rights of others and gave them a better understanding of the rights they should be enjoying.

20. The illegal blockade of Gaza remained in place, subjecting Palestinians to a collective punishment and denying all but a few the opportunity to lead normal lives, including by interacting with the outside world. Currently, 893,000 Palestine refugees were food-dependent — eleven times more than 15 years earlier. Gaza's 42 per cent unemployment rate was the highest in the world, and its refugee-youth unemployment rate was 70 per cent. In 2014, its economy experienced 15 per cent negative growth, and its per capita GDP was only 72 per cent of the 1994 level.

21. UNRWA had made enormous efforts to rehabilitate the 140,750 Palestine refugee homes and shelters damaged in the devastating 2014 Gaza conflict, completing more than half the caseload for minor repairs of Palestine refugee dwellings. However, the first reconstruction of a completely-demolished Palestine refugee home had taken no fewer than 14 months; while approvals for some 170 homes had been granted, the pace of rebuilding must increase, and funding remained insufficient to rebuild the homes that had been destroyed or severely damaged in 2014.

22. Fifteen years of ongoing armed conflict and eight years of blockade had decimated Gaza's agriculture,

small businesses and cottage industries. Its infrastructure was fragile and had only a limited capacity to provide electricity and potable water, which were both necessities for the population's sustenance. The United Nations projected that Gaza would not be liveable by 2020 unless the international community engaged all parties concerned to lift the blockade and support large-scale humanitarian and development activities. The deplorable conditions imposed on the people of Gaza — half of whom were children — could only be described as immoral, untenable and undermining to the security and rights of States and peoples in the region.

23. The recent upsurge in violence and protests in the West Bank including East Jerusalem had directly impacted Palestinians, with some 71 fatalities and over 7,500 injuries in the first month of unrest. As the Deputy Secretary-General had said at the Security Council's quarterly Middle East debate, the crisis would not have erupted if the Palestinian people, among others, had any hopeful prospects for a viable Palestinian State, an economy that offered jobs and opportunities, and control over their legal and administrative processes. UNRWA was shocked by the upsurge in violence affecting Palestinian and Israeli civilians, the pattern of deadly force against Palestinians, increased use of live ammunition in and around refugee camps, settlement expansion, increased settler violence against Palestine refugees and the latter's displacement as a result of the demolition and destruction of structures. Also concerning were the longstanding threats to transfer Bedouin communities, a majority of whom were Palestine refugees, from Area C to three townships. Such transfers would contravene Israel's obligations under international law.

24. Some 450,000 Palestine refugees — 80 per cent of the pre-war total — remained in Syria; almost all of them required the Agency's assistance to fulfil their basic needs. UNRWA estimated that 58,000 refugees had fled to Lebanon and Jordan and 52,000 to locations outside its areas of operation such as Europe, Asia and Latin America. Many had tragically lost their lives while making the perilous journey to Europe.

25. UNRWA's ability to provide emergency shelter, education and health services in situ using its long-established infrastructure had undoubtedly played an important role in individual families' decision to remain in Syria. It was therefore vital that those emergency services should be adequately funded and

that the Agency should continue providing education to children living in critical conditions.

26. Supporting the Agency's efforts in Syria was both cost-effective and humane: recent estimates suggested that the cost of supporting Palestine refugees was seven times higher in Europe than in Syria. According to current trends, only just over half of the Agency's 2015 emergency appeal for \$420 million would be met. As winter approached, \$124 million would be needed for emergency cash, shelter and winterization, \$30 million for emergency food assistance, \$17 million for emergency education and \$24 million for livelihoods. If fully delivered, the specified services could substantially determine whether refugees decided to remain in Syria or not.

27. Palestine refugees yearned for stability. Even in the battle-scarred area of Yarmouk and its environs, to which the Agency had only limited access, those refugees continued to live in the direst conditions, harbouring the hope that they would be able to return to their former lives. It was incumbent on the international community to assist them and support UNRWA's emergency work. He paid tribute to the Agency's courageous staff in Syria, 14 of whom lost their lives and almost 30 of whom were unaccounted for or detained. Very few agencies would continue operations under such circumstances.

28. In Lebanon, there had been no change in the status or work opportunities for the Palestine refugees residing there and the additional 42,000 Palestine refugees from Syria. The latter community's needs for cash, food, housing assistance and emergency health care were urgent. For instance, UNRWA had recently been forced to eliminate its housing subsidy to Palestine refugee families from Syria, exposing tens of thousands to the prospect of homelessness on the streets of Lebanon.

29. Weakening coping mechanisms would reduce those refugees' ability to remain in Lebanon temporarily, increasing the chance that they would either return to Syria or risk dangerous smuggling routes to reach Europe. Their precarious legal status also made it difficult for them to obtain civil documentation for birth, marriage, divorce and death. Left unresolved, that situation would lead to the emergence of an undocumented population, with concomitant risks. He noted with satisfaction, however, that the 6,500 Palestine refugee children from Syria

had matched the results and performance levels of the refugee students already living in Lebanon.

30. He once again drew attention to the Agency's largest housing project, the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, whose reconstruction continued far too slowly for lack of donor funds. He was grateful to Saudi Arabia for its additional support, but noted with concern that approximately half the families displaced eight years earlier remained displaced. Failure to complete the project expeditiously reflected the international community's failure to understand how deeply humiliating it was for thousands of residents to continue living in inadequate temporary shelters.

31. Jordan hosted the largest number of Palestine refugees — 2.1 million — as well as the 16,000 estimated to have fled from Syria. Jordan and Lebanon had been severely affected by the Syrian crisis and deserved greater international support to enhance the resilience of the vast number of refugees from Syria sheltered in each country. UNRWA recognized the great burden placed on Jordan and had requested that its Government ensure equal treatment and protection of all refugees in accordance with international standards.

32. UNRWA's financial crisis that summer was symptomatic of a broader existential crisis within the world's humanitarian system, whose donor resources could not keep pace with growing needs. UNRWA provided for 44 per cent of the world's long-term refugees and successfully integrated humanitarian and development funding, having the institutions and structures to address emergency needs and provide human-development services.

33. UNRWA strongly endorsed the efforts of the Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat Jemilah Mahmood and her team to collaborate with all stakeholders in identifying ways to remodel the global humanitarian system. Innovative approaches were required to ensure that people affected by crises were adequately cared for.

34. As emphasized during the preparations to the World Humanitarian Summit, UNRWA supported empowering local actors and enhancing the protection of vulnerable populations. While strongly supporting the call to revitalize the core principle of putting people at the heart of humanitarian action, UNRWA continued to operate in a highly polarized environment. In the light of recent allegations of inappropriate

statements by UNRWA staff, notably on social media, the Agency unequivocally condemned any form of anti-Semitism and racism; its position on that issue was a matter of public record. It took every allegation seriously and would continue to take disciplinary action as required.

35. Recalling that the historical injustice bequeathed to successive generations of Palestine refugees remained unresolved, he regretted that a political settlement had never appeared further from the international community's grasp. However, as demonstrated by recent events in Jerusalem and the West Bank, it had never been more urgent to take political action, especially as the Middle East became more fragmented and chaotic. Every effort to control the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had failed. UNRWA must be supported in its endeavour to create conditions for Palestine refugees to live dignified lives until the realization of a just resolution of their plight.

Interactive dialogue

36. **Mr. Çevik** (Turkey), citing UNRWA's critical role in the Middle East region, said that in the light of the recent financial crisis, it clearly needed greater international support. He asked the Commissioner-General to elaborate on the Agency's current efforts to diversify its donor base and strengthen partnerships, and on ways that Member States could support those efforts.

37. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked what the Secretary-General had done to implement paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 65/272 requesting his support for the institutional strengthening of the Agency with financial resources from the regular United Nations budget. Facing a major budget deficit in 2015, as it had the previous year and perhaps again the following year, UNRWA should have predictable financing, which was not possible with voluntary contributions.

38. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) reaffirmed her delegation's appreciation of the UNRWA Commissioner-General's leadership and compelling advocacy on behalf of the Palestine refugees in challenging times, and of the Agency's entire staff — both national and international — for their tireless efforts to fulfil its mandate and provide a constant measure of stability and hope. She recognized their dedication and courage in the context of a volatile

environment and the personal challenges and risks that many of them faced, given that the majority of the staff were Palestine refugees themselves. In that context and in follow-up to the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry with regard to certain incidents affecting UNRWA's schools (S/2015/286), including attacks on those schools during the 2014 Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip, and in the light of several killings of United Nations staff members during that aggression, she asked what measures had been taken to enhance the security and protection of UNRWA's staff and premises, including under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. She also wondered what steps, if any, had been taken to ensure accountability for the killing of civilians on Agency premises as well as the killing of staff members and the destruction of Agency property by the occupying Power.

39. **Mr. Krähenbühl** (Commissioner-General of UNRWA) expressed his sincere appreciation to the donors present. The Agency currently had several efforts underway to broaden its base of historic supporters, some of which entailed proactive engagement with additional Member States. To that end, he had visited China, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea. The Agency would also focus its outreach efforts on countries in regional groups to build diplomatic and partnership ties, and certainly would cooperate with Turkey in that regard.

40. UNRWA had a limited track record of engaging with international trust funds such as the World Bank Trust Funds for education, and would verify its eligibility for such funding. Unlike many humanitarian organizations, UNRWA had a mixed budget that provided for the predictable annual costs of its education and health-care activities. In that regard, it was similar to a government ministry that needed to ensure the delivery of a service to an entire population. In view of those recurrent costs, the Agency should have a more predictable multi-year funding arrangement with Member States and, potentially, other platforms.

41. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General had made genuine efforts to ensure UNRWA funding and to advocate on behalf of its international positions, which had increased in recent years. That matter was still being discussed in the Fifth Committee. Meanwhile, UNRWA still relied primarily on voluntary contributions, requiring it to conduct a challenging resource mobilization every year.

42. The Agency had carried out security assessments on the ground and had begun to implement a number of United Nations recommendations regarding the situation in Gaza. More broadly, he was concerned that the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) framework applied to UNRWA's international staff, but not its national staff. That framework entailed annual costs of \$80 million to the 30,000 national staff. The Agency's inability to carry those costs reflected, in Syria and in Gaza the previous year, a security management framework different from that for any other national staff in the United Nations system. In the light of UNRWA's significant personnel losses, he was currently investigating other ways to address and improve overall security management for his entire national staff.

43. Regarding accountability, UNRWA had engaged with Israel during its own investigation and fact-finding mission, with a view to submitting its observations on all the cases that Israel had investigated. UNRWA called on Israel to adopt accountability measures when investigations and fact-finding missions were started. It would submit its own findings and await the conclusion of the process before commenting further.

44. Mr. Suleman (Pakistan) said that the illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, currently in its eighth year, must be lifted in accordance with international humanitarian law, to allow for economic recovery and physical reconstruction and promote opportunities for Gaza's large youth population. The current tripartite agreement among Israel, Palestine and the United Nations was no substitute for lifting the blockade. He asked if that mechanism had actually facilitated the Agency's efforts to import supplies, provide services and begin reconstruction of the thousands of refugee shelters damaged or destroyed during the 2014 Israeli aggression, as well as those that remained unrepaired following past aggressions. He also asked about the current situation of families whose houses had yet to be rebuilt.

45. Mr. Habib (Indonesia), citing UNRWA's unprecedented funding crisis and declining annual funding, and its status as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, asked what the Agency's specific financial requests of Member States were.

46. Mr. Djaceta (Algeria), deploring the tragic situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, whence

thousands of refugees had fled to neighbouring countries, asked what the Agency was doing to attend to the basic needs of those refugees. As the Commissioner-General had noted, it should be highlighted that some refugees were attending and performing well at schools in those countries.

47. Mr. Elshandawilly (Egypt) said that Palestine refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued to suffer from many illegal Israeli policies and practices, such as confiscation of land, home demolition and increased settlement activity. He asked what the Agency did to support the rights and address the needs of refugee families specifically affected by those practices.

48. Mr. Gidor (Israel) said that while he commended the Commissioner-General on his energetic and professional leadership of the Agency, his country still had substantive textual and methodological reservations concerning certain aspects of Commissioner-General's report (A/70/13), most significantly, its unbalanced and disproportionate description of the various crises affecting Palestine refugees across the Middle East. He presumed that for some of the cases of staff members killed and missing, as reported in paragraph 9 of the document, the identity of the perpetrators had been made known to the Agency. Nevertheless, in stark contrast to the sections of the report dealing with Israel, the report assigned no culpability to any faction, organization or individual. He asked the Commissioner-General to enlighten the Committee as to who was responsible and whether the Agency would push for the establishment of a board of inquiry similar to the one that had been set up after the 2014 war in Gaza.

49. Page 23 of the English version provided a detailed breakdown of seven incidents leading to damage of property and loss of life at UNRWA facilities in Gaza. However, somewhat predictably, no such breakdown was provided in respect of the appalling carnage and devastation inflicted on Palestine refugees and UNRWA facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic. Furthermore, paragraph 10 of the report expressed praise and gratitude to the Syrian regime — considered by most enlightened societies and Western governments to be genocidal — for its support for Palestine refugees. That was surprising, to say the least, and could hardly be reconciled with the list of casualties among UNRWA staff in that country and the shocking conditions in the Yarmouk refugee

camp in Damascus. Given the absence of anything even approaching a similar expression of gratitude to the Israeli authorities for the provision of running water and electricity in Gaza, even at the height of the war with Hamas in 2014, or its continued reconstruction efforts there, he wondered whether the Agency was upholding the Syrian regime as a role model to be followed.

50. The section entitled "Legal matters" listed a litany of legal complaints by UNRWA against various Israeli Government bodies on matters ranging from taxation to transit permits and consular restrictions. Only one largely factual and non-polemic paragraph dealt with the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Was his delegation once again forced to conclude that UNRWA had no legal complaints or issues to raise with the notoriously law-abiding regime in Damascus? Regrettably, that imbalance had also been manifest in the Commissioner-General's statement, during which almost 30 minutes had been devoted to the root causes, conduct and outcome of a fifty-day war in Gaza that had ended 15 months prior to the meeting, while less than 5 minutes had been allocated to a war that had been raging in the Syrian Arab Republic for five years and was worsening. He had listened closely to the Commissioner-General but could detect no apportioning of culpability with respect to the carnage in that country; one could even imagine that the deaths were the result of a natural disaster and not of a prolonged, man-made crime perpetrated largely through, but not exclusively by, the Syrian regime.

51. He asked the Commissioner-General to enlighten the Committee on the identity of the body that had been controlling the Gaza Strip for almost a decade. The report referred repeatedly to hostilities between the State of Israel and the Palestinians of Gaza, without mentioning their leaders. He wondered who handed out military instructions and was responsible for placing weapons and ammunition in UNRWA schools and facilities. Furthermore, he would appreciate clarification regarding why the word "Hamas" was mentioned only once in the entire report, and only in the context of Palestinian national-unity endeavours, and also wished to know how operating in a territory controlled by an internationally-proscribed terror organization affected the daily work and staff of the Agency.

52. Mr. Forés Rodríguez (Cuba) asked what the Agency was doing to help the Palestine refugees

achieve the development goals of the recently-adopted post-2015 agenda, such as reducing inequality, eliminating poverty, ensuring inclusive and quality education, and protecting vulnerable populations.

53. Mr. Krähnenbühl (Commissioner-General of UNRWA), referring to the Gaza reconstruction mechanism, said that procedures and approaches had initially been complicated, as evidenced by the results on the ground. Subsequently, there had been improvements in how the mechanism facilitated the arrival of material, but it was still insufficient, in terms of scale, speed and other conditions determined by donors, for providing financial support. The appeal by UNRWA only covered between 33 and 35 per cent of needs, so there was still a substantial gap. Despite close interaction with stakeholders, funding remained a core issue. As for financial requests, UNRWA was spending on average US\$ 1.2 to US\$ 1.3 billion on operations. The present meeting of the Committee was not the appropriate occasion for pledging announcements or requests, but it was important to understand that the Organization's long-term commitment in education and healthcare required predictable multi-year arrangements to avoid challenging situations, and he called for more Member States to join the financial effort to that end.

54. In line with its mandate, the Agency focused not only on Palestine refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, but also those fleeing the conflict in Syria. Every single refugee was therefore eligible and entitled to the services provided by UNRWA, and children were immediately integrated into schools. As to land confiscation and the destruction of homes, the Agency's first action was to engage with refugees, document cases, and address families' immediate needs. As part of its regular dialogue with the Israeli Defence Force and the Government, UNRWA also submitted its observations and findings on cases with an view to ensuring the non-repetition of such actions.

55. Turning to the points raised by the Israeli representative, he said that by the very definition of the term "missing", responsibility was difficult to assign when people were unaccounted for. However, he had no doubt that some of the missing staff members had been detained by Syrian Government forces, and he had raised the issue in Damascus. Attempts to assign responsibilities during a war such as the one in Syria complicated an already complex issue. Whether or not the Secretary-General would decide to establish a

board of inquiry was a matter of speculation, but the issue of threats to the safety or lives of United Nations staff should be scrutinized closely in any context. He recalled that, at the twentieth meeting of the Committee in 2014, the representative of Israel had made similar comments on the disparity between his breakdown of the situation in Israel and in Syria. However, the current report (A/70/13) had far more specific content on Syria than the previous report because there were many issues to be addressed relating to the security, well-being and safety of Palestine refugees. His role was not to compare across country contexts. While it was legitimate for the representative to look into the information provided on Israel, he reiterated that regardless of the frequency and detail with which the Agency examined or compared the situation in Israel and that of Syria, no Government could be relieved of its responsibility to protect and ensure the well-being of Palestine refugees living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He would be happy to discuss that further in a bilateral setting. Furthermore, he had no difficulty naming or referring to the role of Hamas, or any other actors, but the fact remained that neither the Secretary-General's board of inquiry nor any other body had been able to attribute responsibility to a specific group for the placement of weapons components at three UNRWA schools during the Gaza conflict; it was thus not a question of the Agency's reluctance to identify the perpetrators. As to how the work and operations of the Agency in the Territory were affected, he said that sheltering 300,000 displaced persons in some 90 school buildings during the war was a tribute to the Agency's operating capacity under the challenge posed by the presence of any armed group or facing the military consequences of the actions of any party, including the Israeli Government. The Agency had a proven track record of response on the ground that was remarkable.

56. Poverty reduction remained one of the Agency's biggest challenges. The inclusion of education, which created employment opportunities, in its core activities had been one of the more noteworthy visions of the Agency since its establishment. The problem for the Palestine refugee community was the contrast between the high quality of education received and the conditions on the ground, which were detrimental to employment and progress. That was where the fight against rising poverty had to take place, but it could not be done unless the core issues were addressed. The

international community must therefore take political action to end the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Those were the dynamics undermining development and employment, creating increased poverty and reducing an educated people — who should be self-sufficient — to dependence on assistance. Without political action, the region would slide further into "de-development" and poverty.

Statement by the Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA

57. Ms. Larsen (Norway), introducing the report of the Working Group (A/70/379), said that the Group's deliberations had changed considerably since it was convened on 1 July 2015, as UNRWA was facing its greatest-ever financial crisis. The Commissioner-General's Special Report (A/70/272) outlined the background of the crisis, which had endangered access to education for half a million Palestine refugees in the Middle East, and the various measures that UNRWA had been taking to remedy it. The Working Group was pleased that the financial gap had been eventually bridged with additional contributions from several countries, and that all Palestine refugee children had returned to school, on time, in all the Agency's areas of operation. Half the amount raised had come in a welcome renewed commitment by Gulf State donors; Saudi Arabia was currently the third largest donor to UNRWA overall. The Group's report described the situation in the Agency's fields of operation, all of which were affected to varying degrees by the current regional unrest.

58. Concerned by the multiplication of crises and their impact on the Agency's operations and funding, and committed to supporting the Agency's fundraising efforts, the Working Group therefore urged Governments that had not yet done so to contribute regularly to UNRWA, particularly to its General Fund, and called on Governments that had made small contributions, or that had reduced or ceased contributions, to step up their support. It also urged Governments to fully fund the Agency's General Fund for the biennium 2014-2015 and, where possible, to establish increased multi-year funding to allow UNRWA to improve planning of its activities. It encouraged all Member States to consider positively the Secretary-General's report on strengthening the management capacity of UNRWA (A/65/705) and all

resolutions relating to the Agency's financing, so as to address recurring budget deficits and support the Agency's vital work. UNRWA had undertaken significant reforms and would continue to identify and implement cost-containing measures wherever possible without sacrificing the quality of its services. There was also a need to identify potential sources of funding to meet severance payment obligations as necessary.

59. The Working Group invited all Member States to consider its recommendations when assessing funding for UNRWA in 2016 and beyond. The Agency had made progress in efforts to contain its costs; Member States should accompany those measures with adequate funding.

General debate

60. Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Palestine refugee problem constituted a core issue that must be resolved, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III), for the realization of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace, a commitment pledged by the international community and which still required responsible, collective and urgent action. The current escalation of tensions and deterioration of the political, security, socio-economic and humanitarian situation were manifestations of the injustice that had persisted for nearly seven decades, denying generations of Palestine refugees their fundamental rights. The majority of the more than 5.5 million refugees registered with UNRWA remained in camps that had been established as temporary shelters, and successive crises had compounded their vulnerability with displacement and dispossession, death and injury, rising poverty and unemployment. Fragmentation was currently undermining their resilience and creating an existential crisis, as so many refugees struggled for survival, forced to flee the ravages of war and poverty in search of ever-elusive security and a better life for their families. That phenomenon was especially stark in Syria, as the catastrophic conflict spilled over into Lebanon and Jordan, and in Occupied Palestine, where refugee communities were disproportionately affected by the brutality and indignity of Israeli occupation. The current refugee and migrant crisis in the region and in Europe had brought into painful focus the misery of what it meant to be a refugee, a term to which many had become inured when it came to Palestine refugees. It further underscored the urgent need for humane

solutions based on international law, including humanitarian and human-rights law, to address root causes.

61. While political will must be mobilized to address the immediate refugee crisis, comprehensive solutions also required addressing the historic plight of the Palestine refugees and the reigning insecurity, turmoil and sense of injustice. Rectifying that injustice remained at the core of Palestine's search for peace. She reaffirmed the centrality of the Palestine refugees' rights of return and to just compensation for their losses and suffering, based on resolution 194 (III) and relevant provisions of international law; and the right of the Palestinians displaced in June 1967 to return to their homes and lands, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions and agreements reached by the parties in the 1990s. By rejecting those rights and using rhetoric minimizing the importance of a just solution for the Palestine refugee issue for achieving peace, Israel was being irresponsible and provocative, reinforcing its total disrespect of human rights and failure to commit to even the most basic principles of peacemaking. The international community must demand that Israel comply with its legal obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant resolutions; Israel could not be allowed to continue obstructing peace without consequence.

62. The Agency's assistance exemplified the nexus between meaningful humanitarian assistance and development, showing that basic needs could be fulfilled while also building human capital and preserving rights and dignity, even in times of conflict and crisis. Providing an important model in the era of sustainable development for all, it deserved praise and support for its work, which should also be prioritized in the context of international humanitarian aid. In the absence of a just solution, UNRWA — whose education, job-creation, microfinance, maternal-health and other programmes had irrefutably made a tangible difference in the lives of the Palestine refugees — remained indispensable. However, it could not be taken for granted: the recent risks posed to the Agency's education programme, with the possible closure of 685 schools and 8 vocational centres, stoked deep anxieties. At a time when the rest of the world emphasized the importance of education for sustainable development and for the peace and security of nations, it would be unacceptable to leave Palestine

refugee children behind and deny them their right to education, with the inherent dangers posed thereby. The Agency's immediate mobilization at the highest levels to avert the crisis and the collective efforts to secure adequate resources for that core programme were commendable.

63. In each of the Agency's 58 camps, the needs were real and the dreams of justice and of a free, dignified life hung in the balance. The strong donor response to the unprecedented financial crisis in August 2015 had been crucial for covering the funding gap and reconfirmed the importance of the Agency's humanitarian mission. Moreover, the political, financial and moral support and solidarity for the Palestine refugees – reiterated at the September 2015 High-level Ministerial Meeting on the Financial Sustainability of UNRWA – and the early convening of the annual pledging conference reflected strong international commitment. Palestine recognized the crucial assistance and cooperation of the host countries over the years, as well as of the donor community, including members and Observers of the Advisory Commission and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA. The generosity of traditional, major donors and of new and emerging donors was appreciated, and it was hoped that those contributions would become regular. Her delegation appealed for contributions to the Agency's General Fund and emergency appeals and for multi-year contributions where possible. Palestine fully supported the Agency's efforts to diversify the donor base and strengthen partnerships, and hoped for the success of its medium-term strategy. While the Agency's humanitarian-assistance, human-development and protection work remained necessary, she reiterated the urgent call for serious efforts to attain a just solution to the question of Palestine. There was a pressing need to secure a credible political horizon to address all core final-status issues and urge the international community to mobilize the political will required to help the parties realize a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to fulfil the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, and attain peace. It was a matter of political, humanitarian and moral urgency.

64. Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, praised the Agency's tireless efforts, courage and dedication under difficult and often dangerous

circumstances; 18 staff members had lost their lives in the line of duty, many in the 2014 war in Gaza. Expressing serious concerns about the violation of the immunity of UNRWA personnel and premises by Israel, the Movement condemned in the strongest terms the killing of United Nations personnel and the destruction of United Nations premises. The mandated role of UNRWA in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was essential in the absence of a just and lasting solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees that would include their rights under General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Movement was gravely concerned by the critical situation of the refugees, whose lives the occupation continued to define adversely in every aspect, from security and freedom of movement to livelihoods and employment. Palestine refugees had continued to face serious protection challenges throughout 2014 and, in many places, faced existential threats, sinking deeper into poverty and desperation. The disastrous situation had been exacerbated by the armed conflicts in Syria.

65. The illegal and inhumane Israeli blockade of Gaza continued to cripple its economy and stifle the population, preventing the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic materials for reconstruction, thus obstructing economic and social recovery. To enable UNRWA personnel to discharge their humanitarian duties freely, the occupying Power must immediately lift all its illegal restrictions on free, sustained movement of persons and goods between Gaza and the outside world, in compliance with international law. The international community must uphold its moral, political and legal responsibilities to bring an end to Israel's illegal policies and all of its violations against the Palestinian people. Israel, the occupying Power, must abide by its obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention) and relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

66. The Movement also expressed concern over the situation of the Palestine refugees in Syria and the further resulting displacement as thousands of them fled to other countries for safety, adding to the demands on UNRWA, particularly by increasing the need for emergency assistance. Donors must respond to those urgent needs. The continued funding shortfall remained a concern, as it undermined the Agency's efforts to promote human development and meet

refugees' needs. The Movement urged all Member States, especially the traditional donors, to increase their contributions to UNRWA to avoid a financial crisis in the coming years. While appreciating the efforts of and pledges made during the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, the Non-Aligned Movement encouraged all donors to maintain their generosity, enabling UNRWA to overcome the serious financial shortfalls and funding gaps it still faced, with increased expenditures arising from the grave socio-economic and humanitarian situation and instability in all its fields of operation. The Movement thus continued to support General Assembly resolution 65/272, as well as the Agency's unwavering efforts despite many difficulties. The current humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, must be addressed and the entire international community must intensify its efforts to put an end to the occupation of Palestine and find a just solution for the Palestine refugee problem on the basis of the principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

67. Ms. Radwan (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, cited UNRWA's dangerous and difficult work providing assistance to Palestine refugees under constant threat of Israeli aggression, and expressed appreciation for the sacrifices made by Agency personnel in the line of duty, sometimes at the cost of their own lives.

68. Commending UNRWA for the crucial humanitarian and technical support that it provided to over 5.5 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Group expressed concern at the Agency's severe and unprecedented funding crisis, which had threatened its ability to fulfil its mandate and would have prevented UNRWA schools from re-opening at the beginning of the 2015 school year had it not been for generous last-minute donations from Arab States, most notably Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

69. The Group supported the Commissioner-General's endeavours to stabilize the Agency's financial situation and reiterated its call on the international community, specialized financial institutions and other donors to significantly increase their contributions to UNRWA to enable the Agency to meet its increasing programme requirements in the face

of ongoing Israeli aggression and rising numbers of refugees.

70. While financial backing was urgently needed to relieve the suffering and preserve the dignity of the Palestinian people, the Group emphasized that the only way to solve the underlying problem was to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by international law. Israel must desist from its repeated acts of violence, which caused extensive human and material losses and thwarted reconstruction efforts; lift the suffocating blockade on Gaza; allow immediate entry of all humanitarian assistance; halt settlement construction; and put an end to settler terrorism, such as the appalling act of terror perpetrated by Israeli settlers who set fire to the Dawabsha family home, burning alive a young infant and causing the later death of other family members.

71. In the West Bank, Palestinians were denied freedom of movement and basic standards of living, poverty was on the rise and the economy was deteriorating. Israel continued to terrorize Palestinians, use live ammunition to mercilessly kill Palestinians in residential areas and expand settlements in Jerusalem, thus putting 7,000 Bedouin residents, most of whom were registered as Palestine refugees, at risk of losing their homes. Faced with such flagrant violations of international law, it was high time for the international community to take a bold stance by holding Israel accountable for its crimes and providing assistance to the Palestinian people as a matter of urgency.

72. The Group was extremely concerned about the dangers and human suffering experienced by Palestine refugees as a result of the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. It condemned the gross violations committed in Yarmouk refugee camp, where basic humanitarian assistance had been blocked, and called for urgent action to end that crisis and hold the perpetrators accountable. It urged the international community to step up efforts to support and cooperate with the Agency to support the plight of refugees fleeing the Syrian crisis.

73. The Group was firmly committed to assisting UNRWA in its work until Palestine refugees could return to their homeland and receive the compensation they deserved for the terrible damages inflicted upon them for decades, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Reiterating that the Palestinian tragedy would not end while Israel

continued its occupation of Arab territories, violations of international law, and campaign of murder and violence against the Palestinian people, the Group supported all efforts to secure urgent international support, establish a deadline to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, ensure Israel's withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders and move towards the two-State solution envisioned under the Arab Peace Initiative.

74. Speaking in her national capacity, she said that her Government was proud to support the Palestinian people and their legitimate religious and humanitarian need to live in freedom and dignity and exercise their inalienable rights. Saudi Arabia had contributed over \$350 million to UNRWA in 2014, making it one of the Agency's main donors alongside the United States and the European Union, and had been among the first States to respond to the Agency's recent urgent appeal with a donation of \$35 million to help cover the deficit and prevent the closure of UNRWA schools. In addition, Saudi Arabia had recently pledged \$111 million to fund Agency programmes and operations involving education, health care, reconstruction in the Gaza Strip following the Israeli attack in 2014, repair and reconstruction of schools and homes in the West Bank and the Nahr el-Bared camp in Lebanon, and provision of humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees affected by the Syrian conflict.

75. Her Government looked forward to cooperating with other stakeholders to raise further contributions from States and international organizations such as the World Bank, in order to permanently resolve the Agency's financial crisis, particularly in the area of education. Highlighting the vital role played by UNRWA in meeting the basic needs of Palestine refugees, Saudi Arabia expressed appreciation to all donors and pledged its ongoing commitment to the Agency. In view of their intense suffering for over 65 years, urgent action was needed to provide Palestine refugees with international protection and tackle the root cause of the problem by ending Israel's occupation of Arab territories and establishing a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

76. Mr. Storaet (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the country of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Ukraine, said that humanitarian

workers worked in difficult and dangerous circumstances and must be protected by the relevant authorities. He expressed appreciation to all UNRWA staff for their work and offered condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

77. Recalling the sense of urgency at the recent High-Level Ministerial Meeting on the Financial Sustainability of UNRWA, when donors had acted to overcome financial difficulties so as to ensure UNRWA schools re-opened for the 2015 school year, he stressed that Palestine refugees must be guaranteed the right to education, a crucial means of preserving their dignity and offering hope for the future. Commending the efforts of the Agency, he expressed gratitude to all donors, in particular Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, for their contributions, which had averted the crisis and allowed 500,000 children to return to school.

78. Given UNRWA's continuing essential role in the region, greater efforts were needed to rejuvenate the Agency, make its work more sustainable and enable it to fulfil its mandate with minimal risk to its operations. That would require a change of approach and sustained, long-term efforts on the part of all stakeholders, including donors, host countries, Agency staff and the refugees themselves. In that regard, he underscored the need for burden-sharing and urged new donors to step forward.

79. The European Union welcomed UNRWA's medium-term strategy and emphasized that while the Agency could not meet all the needs of the 5 million registered Palestine refugees, its wealth of experience, broad geographic reach and dedicated staff made it a viable partner with which other authorities could cooperate.

80. As the main providers of international assistance to UNRWA, the European Union and its Member States reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to supporting the Agency, while urging it to implement initiatives to secure medium-term budget and financial stability and ensure delivery of core services to the most vulnerable refugees. Commending the efforts and leadership of the Commissioner-General in that regard, the European Union urged UNRWA to take further steps to reduce the deficit in its General Fund, and to effectively communicate to Agency staff and refugees

that such efforts were intended to stabilize and protect the delivery of core services.

81. Expressing concern over the dire situation in the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees were dependent on UNRWA food aid, he called on the international community to address the situation and tackle the root causes of conflict as a matter of priority. While the European Union welcomed recent steps taken by Israel to ease restrictions in Gaza, much remained to be done to enable full delivery of humanitarian aid and facilitate reconstruction and economic recovery. Recalling the tragic hostilities of 2014, when UNRWA facilities were bombed and 11 Agency staff lost their lives, he reiterated that compliance with international law and international humanitarian law by States and non-State actors was a cornerstone of peace and security in the region.

82. Regarding the crisis UNRWA faced in Syria, he noted that refugee camps and neighbourhoods, particularly Yarmouk, frequently experienced intense armed engagements and were too often deprived of humanitarian assistance. Acknowledging the efforts of countries in the region to deal with the influx of refugees fleeing Syria, he called on all parties to the conflict, in particular the Assad regime, to fully implement all provisions of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) and the presidential statement of 2 October 2013, by taking appropriate measures to protect civilians, desisting from attacks on civilian objectives, and providing full and unobstructed access to humanitarian aid.

83. Thanking UNRWA for its vital work at a time when Palestine refugees were in particularly acute need of its help, he reaffirmed that the only way to end their plight was to reach a fair and realistic solution, as part of a comprehensive peace agreement based on a two-State solution, that would end the occupation and all further claims and meet the aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. The European Union remained committed to cooperating with its international partners, including as part of the Quartet for Middle East peace, and with the parties concerned to improve the situation on the ground and work towards final-status negotiations on a comprehensive settlement to the conflict. Pending such an agreement, the European Union and its Member States would continue to support UNRWA in its crucial work, which helped to keep alive the values of humanity, solidarity and

dignity and preserve the future for young people who had already known too much suffering.

84. Ms. Kawar (Jordan) said that even in 1949, when UNRWA was dealing with only around 700,000 Palestine refugees whom it expected would soon return home, the refugee problem had been an enormous challenge for the international community. Sixty-five years later, faced with over five million Palestine refugees and an increasingly complex situation, compounded by a severe lack of financial support and no prospect of a lasting solution, the Agency was struggling to cope with rising demands. Under United Nations resolutions and international law, the responsibility to assist and relieve the suffering of Palestine refugees lay not only with host countries and a handful of donors, but on the entire international community. The financial and moral support provided to Palestine refugees by host countries, international donors and UNRWA was absolutely crucial, and any reduction in any part of that support would jeopardize progress towards the achievement of a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the refugee problem.

85. Of particular concern was the situation in Gaza, where living conditions were harsh, refugees were deprived of their basic needs, and the Israeli authorities restricted the movement of both refugees and UNRWA staff, thus obstructing the provision of essential services. As the Agency had already been suffering a financial crisis for many months, even the slightest drop in funding would be extremely detrimental to its ability to provide those services, as had been demonstrated earlier in 2015 when the Agency had almost been forced to delay the start of the school year for over 500,000 pupils. Moreover, funding cuts to the Agency served to further shift the burden onto host countries. In order to improve living conditions for refugees and work towards a lasting solution to their plight, the Agency must be provided with a solid financial basis for its work. It was therefore imperative to expand the donor base and adopt a new methodology that would ensure sustained assistance for Palestine refugees.

86. Jordan was highly committed to addressing humanitarian issues, in particular the situation of Palestine refugees, and insisted that Palestinians must be guaranteed the right of return and the right to compensation. Working in partnership with UNRWA to assist refugees through a network of schools, clinics and social centres, Jordan was presently hosting 42 per

cent of all Palestine refugees, more than any other country, and had received an extra 15,000 Palestine refugees over the past year as a result of the crisis in Syria. In September 2015, together with Sweden, Jordan had convened the High-Level Ministerial Meeting on the Financial Sustainability of UNRWA to tackle the Agency's financial deficit. Despite its limited resources, the Jordanian Government would continue to provide protection and assistance to Palestine refugees until their situation could be justly resolved by ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a fully independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

87. Expressing appreciation to the Agency's international donors for their support and commending UNRWA and its staff for their vital work in a region that had experienced rising instability in recent years, she reiterated that the work of the Agency not only helped to guarantee Palestine refugees their basic rights and dignity, but also contributed to regional stability.

88. Mr. Wehbi (Lebanon) said that while significant milestones had been reached in the past year, such as the raising of the flag of the State of Palestine at the United Nations and the 65th anniversary of UNRWA, the Agency had also faced its worst financial crisis. The international community must therefore remain focussed on ensuring the welfare and protection of Palestinians and their rights.

89. Noting the drastic efforts to reform UNRWA since 2006, he stressed that the Agency's leadership and staff must be enabled to focus on service delivery and on raising the necessary funds to strengthen its financial structure and ensure the predictability of its resources. Only a strong and able UNRWA could contribute to stability in the region, pending a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, including the issue of Palestine refugees, pursuant to international law and United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 194 (III).

90. Lebanon, where Palestine refugees made up around 10 per cent of the population, had recently welcomed an additional 45,000 refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria. However, while the refugee population was growing, services were deteriorating and financial resources were dwindling. Refugees fleeing Syria were no longer receiving cash assistance,

which had previously formed their main source of income, leading to an alarming situation in which Palestine refugees in Lebanon were severely lacking support.

91. As a host country and member of both the UNRWA Advisory Commission and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, Lebanon was committed to working closely with the Agency in all available forums. When its financial crisis had risked delaying the start of the 2015 UNRWA school year, the President of the Lebanese Council of Ministers had written to the Secretary-General in support of the efforts of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to secure the necessary funding to enable the affected children to return to school. The Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee was endeavouring to ensure better protection of Palestine refugees' rights, including through adopting legislation regulating Palestinian workers' access to the Lebanese labour market, publishing a guide to Palestinian workers' rights and obligations and implementing a vaccination campaign.

92. The Government of Lebanon was grateful to donors who had assisted in the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared camp and called on Member States to comply with the principle of shared responsibility by donating the \$157 million still needed to complete the reconstruction project and relocate the 26,000 registered Palestine refugees who had been displaced from the camp. Member States were also urged to respond to the Agency's appeal for funds to cover the basic humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees fleeing the Syrian crisis. In addition to the humanitarian aid it provided, the Agency's very existence served as a reminder to the international community of the need to recognize Palestine refugees' rights to return and live in dignity, peace and justice.

93. Mr. Pederson (Norway), citing UNRWA's pivotal role in providing services to rising numbers of refugees, including Palestine refugees, who had been forced to flee unbearable conditions in their homeland, said that the capacity of host countries to provide for refugees had been stretched to its limit and increasing demands were affecting the Agency's ability to operate. Norway was deeply concerned that if the current situation continued, the Agency could be forced to suspend some of its basic services, including education services.

94. Donors and the international community had a duty to ensure that UNRWA was able to provide services to refugees, and the effect of refugee displacement on the Agency's resources and priorities should also be assessed. The Agency should continue to adapt its programmes to the changing realities in the region, giving priority to the most vulnerable refugee groups. His delegation supported efforts to accelerate UNRWA reform under its medium-term strategy, which would help to improve the Agency's performance and sustain its budget, and encouraged it to use the report of the Department of Internal Oversight Services as a tool to improve transparency and accountability.

95. Commending the Agency's efforts to rebuild the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in Lebanon, he urged donors to maintain or increase their financial support of the Agency, noting that funding must be predictable, flexible and accompanied by political backing to ensure basic services for refugees until a just and lasting settlement could be found in the region, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. Concerned at the continued loss of life among United Nations staff and expressing condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives in the line of duty, he commended the Agency's efforts to cut budget deficits and reaffirmed Norway's commitment to remaining a predictable donor to UNRWA.

96. Mr. Hamed (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Count Folke Bernadotte, the United Nations Mediator in Palestine, had been right to warn in 1949 that denying Arab refugees the right to return to their homes while allowing Jewish immigrants to replace them would be an offence against the basic principles of justice. Now, almost seven decades later, Israel not only continued to deny Palestine refugees their right of return but was even calling for their refugee status to be withdrawn. Moreover, new settlers were being brought to live in both new and expanding settlements while Palestinians were being forcibly expelled, their houses destroyed and their lands confiscated. The international community had so far failed to fulfil its legal, political and moral duty to end the suffering of Palestine refugees, who now numbered 5 million, instead leaving them prey to the racist settlement colonization campaign which violated their most basic rights. His delegation reaffirmed that the right of return could not be negotiated, conceded or forgotten, as confirmed by international law, in particular resolution 194 (III), which reaffirmed the right of Palestine

refugees to return to their homes at the earliest practicable date and receive compensation for the damages they had suffered. It was highly surreal to hear the representative of Israel, the occupying Power, express concern over the situation of Palestine refugees in Syria.

97. UNRWA continued to perform vital work to relieve the suffering of Palestine refugees, despite systematic and repeated attacks on its staff and facilities by the Israeli occupying forces, notably during the most recent Israeli offensive when 76 of the Agency's schools had been targeted and 11 of its staff had been killed.

98. Emphasizing that Arab States that received Palestine refugees were not only host countries but also donors, since they provided refugees with services and assistance with no support from other States, he said that the Syrian Arab Republic had fulfilled its responsibility to welcome Palestine refugees and treat them without discrimination. As noted by various reports of the UNRWA Commissioner-General, his country had for many decades offered the best possible conditions for Palestine refugees. While acknowledging that Palestine refugees in his country were currently experiencing greater hardship than before, he emphasized that that change had been brought about by two factors: firstly, the attacks carried out by armed terrorist groups, including Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusra Front, on Palestine refugees and Syrian citizens residing in refugee camps, forcing many of them to flee the camps in search of safety; and secondly, the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed by certain States, including those of the European Union, on the Syrian Arab Republic, which negatively affected the lives of both Syrian citizens and Palestine refugees residing in the country. Noting Israel's highly surreal earlier comments on the situation in his country, he requested all delegations to take the two aforementioned factors into consideration before condemning the situation of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic.

99. His Government would continue to do everything in its power to support and cooperate with UNRWA. It insisted on the need for sufficient financial resources to enable the Agency to continue its valuable work in accordance with its mandate under General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 1949, and for Palestinians to be granted fair compensation and allowed to return to their homes in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

He called on States spending vast sums of money on waging war, interfering in the affairs of other States, supporting terrorism, and providing military and financial assistance to Israel, to bring those policies in line with the principles of human rights and international law. Emphasizing that even a minuscule portion of those funds could contribute enormously to assisting the Palestine refugees, he expressed disappointment that the States concerned were instead shirking their responsibilities, for reasons plain to all, thus creating a structural deficit in the Agency's budget.

100. Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) said that the efforts made and the tangible results achieved by UNRWA were commendable, as the Agency had succeeded in maintaining an adequate level of services in spite of the extremely volatile context in which it worked and its lack of financial resources. The Syrian conflict and the ongoing deterioration of the security, political and socio-economic situation had particularly severe consequences for the civilian population and for already vulnerable and marginalized Palestine refugees, 95 per cent of whom currently relied on the Agency's humanitarian assistance. The lack of a meaningful Israeli-Palestinian peace process was unsustainable and further compounded the vulnerability of Palestine refugees. The blockade of Gaza, now in its eighth year, and growing violence in the West Bank increased Palestine refugees' reliance on the Agency's protection and services. Switzerland remained very concerned about the repeated and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and human-rights law that had disastrous consequences for the civilian population, and called on all parties to respect their obligations fully and to bring to justice violators of international law.

101. Given its key role in meeting the growing needs of and providing stability for refugees, a strong and effective UNRWA was essential. Its precarious financial situation, however, was weakening its ability to fulfil its mandate: its worst-ever financial crisis had been resolved at the last minute as a result of the generous efforts of many donors, including Switzerland. A longer-term solution must urgently be sought to avoid yearly repetitions of such crises.

102. More than ever, the Agency needed adequate and predictable resources to fulfil its mandate. The underfunding of the General Fund thus remained a primary cause of concern. The Commissioner-

General's efforts to address the unprecedented 2015 shortfall and key sustainability issues were laudable; reforms had proven effective and must be pursued. Further efforts were needed on the part of UNRWA and donors alike, and he encouraged donors to give priority to the General Fund; Switzerland would increase its regular contribution to that Fund to SwF 18.5 million for 2016, with a total contribution of SwF 21 million. Furthermore, his country remained ready to participate in a longer-term consultative process on the Agency's financing with a view to ensuring adequate assistance and protection to Palestine refugees. Switzerland would continue to support the Agency's reforms, in particular the efforts to develop a resource-mobilization strategy to widen its donor base and strengthen its financial stability, and to cooperate closely with the Agency pending a just and lasting solution to the plight of Palestine refugees.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.



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Summary record of the 22nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 10 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bowler (Malawi)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 54: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(A/70/13, A/70/13/Add.1, A/70/379, A/70/308, A/70/340 and A/70/319)

1. Mr. de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) said that UNRWA had shown unwavering commitment to assisting Palestine refugees over the past 65 years, but faced ever-growing challenges, including attacks on its facilities and personnel during the 2014 war in Gaza, an unprecedented financial crisis resulting from the widening gap between limited resources and rising demands, and a recent upsurge in tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, all of which added further strain to the Agency's difficult work.
2. The situation in the Gaza Strip, with 100,000 Palestinians remaining displaced since the 2014 hostilities, the continuing suffocating blockade and unfulfilled reconstruction-funding pledges, was alarming. Youth unemployment in Gaza was at 70 per cent and GDP per capita had fallen by \$400 since 2005. As confirmed by the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council, persistent poverty rates were a significant challenge to Palestine's development. Under such difficult circumstances, UNRWA played a crucial role not only in providing humanitarian assistance but also in promoting stability.
3. Brazil had recently increased its cooperation with UNRWA through voluntary financial contributions and bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Trust Fund contributions towards reconstruction of medical facilities damaged during the 2014 Gaza conflict. Brazil was honoured to have joined the UNRWA Advisory Commission and looked forward to further expanding its cooperation with the Agency.
4. Calling on the international community to step up efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he emphasized that peace and security in the region could only be achieved by ending the occupation and implementing the two-State solution. Until then, Brazil would continue to fulfil its duty to support UNRWA and assist the Palestinian population.
5. Mr. Arcia Vivas (Venezuela) said that despite its budgetary difficulties, UNRWA had worked tirelessly to assist the 5.5 million Palestine refugees who were continually denied their right of return as stipulated in

General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Nevertheless, the Agency had been created as a temporary assistance mechanism pending a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and should not be viewed as a solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees.

6. Resolving the Palestinian humanitarian crisis was inextricably linked to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as that would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination. Israel must therefore end its illegal occupation of the territories belonging to the State of Palestine, in line with Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and cease its construction of settlements and demolition of Palestinian homes.
7. Demand for UNRWA assistance was increasing as a result of heightened Israeli violence in the Palestinian territories and the turmoil brought by terrorist groups to neighbouring countries. Despite recent additional contributions from Arab States, Agency resources continued to dwindle. His delegation therefore called on the international community to increase financial support for UNRWA so that it could fulfil its mandate.
8. His Government condemned Israel's policy of repression, which included political persecution, arrests, torture, summary executions and deliberate acts of violence against Palestinian civilians, including children, all of which was in violation of international law. It also condemned Israel's indiscriminate attacks on Gaza in July 2014, during which UNRWA schools had been bombed and many civilians, including 11 Agency staff, had been killed. The perpetrators of those war crimes must be held accountable in accordance with international law, and Israel must take no further action compromising the integrity, safety and neutrality of UNRWA personnel.
9. His Government reiterated its support for the request of the State of Palestine to establish a system of international protection guaranteeing the security and physical integrity of Palestinian civilians throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories, pursuant to Security Council resolution 904 (1994) and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention).
10. Military aggression and the eight-year blockade of Gaza had crippled its economy, causing extreme poverty, high rates of unemployment and a sense of hopelessness among the youth population. To remedy that situation, the blockade must be lifted and the

international community must honour its pledges to aid reconstruction in the Gaza Strip.

11. As peace in the Middle East would not be achieved until a definitive solution was found to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he called on the parties to reinstitute negotiations on a robust and lasting settlement and reiterated his Government's support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination under a free, sovereign and independent State based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II).

12. Mr. Çevik (Turkey) said that UNRWA was at the forefront of efforts to protect the rights, dignity and identity of Palestine refugees and continued to be one of the few sources of hope for millions of Palestinians struggling for survival in the direst conditions. However, the Agency's operations were being severely encumbered, not only by Israel's ongoing and unpunished attacks, incursions and other illegal practices, but also by the destructive developments in the region, such as the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, which had further exacerbated the plight of Palestine refugees. Faced with such challenges, the efforts of UNRWA to prevent an even worse humanitarian situation deserved the highest praise.

13. Severe funding shortages, combined with rising instability and displacement in the region, had left the Agency barely able to cope with demand for its vital services. Deploring the Agency's recent and unprecedented financial crisis, which had threatened to deprive half a million Palestine refugee children of access to education, Turkey called for efforts to prevent such situations in the future, especially given the importance of education in enhancing the human capital of Palestine refugees and thus contributing to the achievement of peace.

14. His delegation was concerned about Israeli security procedures and tight restrictions on the movement of people, goods and services, in addition to the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip and the devastation caused by Israeli military action in 2014, all of which had significantly compromised the ability of UNRWA to carry out its work.

15. Despite the measures taken in recent years, a change of approach was needed to secure sustained and predictable financing for the Agency, including through long-term financial commitments by Member States, implementation of innovative funding mechanisms,

and expansion of the Agency's donor base. Turkey welcomed the contributions of both traditional and new donors to UNRWA and strongly encouraged the international community to redouble its efforts to enable the Agency to effectively respond to the needs of over 5 million Palestine refugees. For its part, Turkey had increased its contributions to UNRWA, having donated \$369 million of official development assistance over the past decade, in addition to its pledge of \$200 million at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza. Turkey was also sending in-kind and emergency assistance through the Agency and would continue its existing projects to supply humanitarian aid and essential services to Palestine refugees.

16. Given that the plight of the Palestine refugees could only be addressed by ending the occupation of their land, urgent action was needed to reach a negotiated political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on two States living in peace and security within the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Turkey would continue to cooperate with its international partners to support the Palestinian people in their quest for peace, prosperity and dignity.

17. Mr. Fernández Rodríguez (Cuba) said that his Government was a staunch defender of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, who had long been the victims of Israeli aggression. The United Nations had a significant role to play in protecting those rights, including the rights of return and of self-determination. One year after Israel's recent major military assault on the Gaza Strip, the situation on the ground was deteriorating; Palestinians were living in insecurity, poverty and dependence on international aid, and barely a day passed without media reports of the death or detention of Palestinian citizens, predominantly women, children and the elderly. The Israeli Government continued to restrict the freedom of movement of goods and people, including UNRWA staff and materials, and violate the immunity of UNRWA staff and premises. Israel must end its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories, lift the blockade on Gaza immediately and unconditionally, and allow unrestricted movement of goods, people and humanitarian assistance across Gaza's borders.

18. Given that the Agency's perennial budget shortfall hampered its capacity to carry out emergency-response

and other essential programmes, his Government urged the donor community to fulfil its pledges to UNRWA. Cuba would maintain its unwavering support for the Palestinian people's struggle to exercise their inalienable right of self-determination and establish their own independent, sovereign State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

19. Mr. Elshandawily (Egypt) said that the international community must ensure that UNRWA could carry out its vital development work, of importance equal to that of its humanitarian efforts, in a continuous and sustainable manner. A crisis similar to that of 2014, when it had faced the possibility of being unable to open its schools on time, must not be allowed to reoccur. The receipt of development services was a right, not a privilege, of Palestine refugees, especially in light of the continuing historical injustices they were enduring. The provision of such services was also of paramount importance in combating terrorism and extremist ideology. Account must also be taken of the increasing challenges UNRWA faced as a result of the multiple crises in the Middle East, the rising costs of providing services such as health care, and the natural increase in the number of Palestine refugees.

20. Lastly, it was important not to lose focus on the root cause of the issue. The international community must do everything within its power to find a just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine, which must include a just solution to the refugee issue based on the relevant international resolutions.

21. Mr. Al-Hashimi (Qatar) said that the suffering of Palestine refugees would continue until a just solution to their plight was reached. The Agency's work was indispensable, not only in providing basic services to refugees and guaranteeing their basic human rights but also in contributing to progress towards peace in the Middle East. It was therefore of great concern that the Agency's budget shortfall hampered its ability to fulfil its functions, as highlighted by the recent funding crisis which had threatened to prevent UNRWA schools from reopening for the 2015 school year. The Agency's limited resources were further stretched as it strived to provide shelter to hundreds of thousands of civilians who had been displaced as a result of the most recent Israeli assault on Gaza, where the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate and the blockade remained in force. Urgent action was needed to overcome the Agency's current untenable financial situation, as highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General,

the President of the General Assembly, refugee host countries, members of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA.

22. Reiterating the responsibility of the international community towards Palestine refugees, he expressed gratitude to all donors, whom he urged to increase their contributions to UNRWA. Qatar, for its part, had responded to the Agency's urgent appeal for donations in 2014 by pledging \$5 million to support UNRWA activities and programmes over the following five years, particularly in the area of education and school reconstruction. At the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, Qatar had announced an additional pledge of \$1 billion, which constituted half the funding required for the United Nations Support Plan for the Transformation of the Gaza Strip following the destruction of its infrastructure, public institutions and thousands of homes. Qatar was highly appreciative of the efforts of UNRWA staff, who worked in difficult and dangerous conditions to provide essential assistance to Palestine refugees.

23. Mr. Ben Sliman (Tunisia) said that his country commended UNRWA for its exemplary work, which was carried out under extremely difficult conditions, and the cooperation of host countries with the Agency. UNRWA continued to face severe challenges, most notably its dire financial situation: the Agency's financial difficulties and the growing demand for assistance were limiting its capacity to meet the basic needs of Palestine refugees and could lead to the complete cessation of its services. Strong and determined action was needed from the international community to help UNRWA overcome its financial difficulties so as to implement its mandate in a timely and efficient manner.

24. The root cause of the Palestine refugee problem and the broader Palestinian question was the Israeli occupation, which continued to have a negative impact on the lives of Palestine refugees in camps. Israeli policies and practices, which denied Palestine refugees their basic rights, had bred a profound sense of frustration, hopelessness and despair in the West Bank and Gaza. Continuing incursions by Israeli forces into refugee camps, which had already resulted in several refugees being shot dead, and the persistent Israeli aggression against Palestinian people, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions, must be stopped.

25. The enormity of the task ahead called for strengthened support for UNRWA in order to meet the critical needs of Palestine refugees and for a firm commitment by the international community to work towards a just, lasting and comprehensive solution that complied with the Charter, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

26. Mr. Sharoni (Israel) said that UNRWA and Israel had jointly coordinated hundreds of projects providing essential services to the Palestinian people since the creation of the Agency in 1949. Israel recognized the Agency's important contribution to the welfare of Palestine refugees and their descendants and abided by the understandings expressed in the 1967 Comay-Micheltmore exchange of letters. However, his Government strongly opposed the Agency's political agenda.

27. Despite the Agency's mandate to decrease the number of refugees, the number under its care had ballooned from a few hundred thousand at the time of its establishment to over 5 million. In contrast, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) had helped tens of millions of people around the world restart their lives and provide a better future for the next generation. According to UNHCR, a person should lose refugee status upon becoming a citizen of another country, yet that principle was not applied to Palestine refugees.

28. It was regrettable that UNRWA continued to fail to meet the standards of balanced reporting and neutrality expected of United Nations bodies. The Agency was quick to condemn Israel but avoided mentioning Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups by name in its public reports and statements, even though it was well known that Hamas frequently obstructed humanitarian efforts, had repeatedly endangered the lives of Palestinian civilians and had committed war crimes against Israeli civilians. Furthermore, recent reports of UNRWA staff allegedly inciting and advocating Palestinian violence on social media were particularly alarming in light of the recent terrorist attacks that had killed 19 Israeli citizens and injured almost 200. Israel expected UNRWA to abide by the same standards of accountability and transparency that it expected of other parties, and therefore called for an immediate, independent and transparent inquiry into those serious acts of incitement, a prompt account of the investigation, and information concerning any disciplinary measures that

might ensue. Another concern was the promotion by the Agency's education system of a harmful, one-sided narrative amongst Palestinian children that the only possible solution was the so-called claim of return.

29. While Hamas was doing everything in its power to prevent reconstruction in Gaza, Israel was working with UNRWA to address humanitarian issues in the area. Hundreds of vehicles carrying goods entered Gaza every day from Israel, which had facilitated the provision of millions of tons of equipment, materials and supplies for reconstruction efforts over the past year. The Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/70/13) made little mention of the Agency's dialogue and cooperation with the Israeli Government, but gave the Assad regime credit for its facilitation of the Agency's work in the Syrian Arab Republic. There was also a disproportionate focus on Gaza and the West Bank in the report as compared to its discussion of the situation of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic.

30. Israel shared the hope for better lives for the Palestinian people. It was therefore deeply disheartening that the unwillingness of the Palestinian leadership to resume direct negotiations with Israel without preconditions, the real reason for the stalemate concerning their situation, had been neglected in the Committee's discussions.

31. Many Palestine refugees were caught in the chaos of unstable Middle Eastern countries. Those in the Syrian Arab Republic risked death and displacement due to the bloody civil war, while the Palestinian population in Lebanon had been segregated and isolated from the rest of Lebanese society for generations. Many representatives of Arab countries had expressed their concern about the situation of Palestine refugees, yet their Governments preferred to cynically exploit those refugees for political purposes rather than provide assistance. In that connection, it was worth noting that nine of the Agency's top ten donors in 2014 were Western countries.

32. It was regrettable that reckless and inflammatory allegations had been made against Israel by the representatives of certain Arab States while thousands of Palestinians were being massacred by the Syrian regime, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and terrorist groups such as Hezbollah. He encouraged UNRWA to contribute more effectively to a peaceful

future for the region by adopting a more constructive approach based on permanent solutions rather than biased resolutions.

33. Ms. Wilson (Australia) said that UNRWA had continued to fulfil its mandate in an increasingly volatile regional context in 2015. The large-scale movements of people resulting from the humanitarian crisis in Syria, Iraq and other countries in the region had made the daily work of the Agency more difficult and placed competing demands on donor contributions.

34. Welcoming the Commissioner-General's strategic approach and efforts to bring the private sector into the Agency's work, including through microfinance and technical and vocational education and training, as supporting economic activity and providing long-term benefits for the Palestinian people, she also commended the Agency's innovative solutions to difficult problems, such as reducing the cost of health services while ensuring continuous care. The Commissioner-General's commitment to putting UNRWA on a firmer financial footing reassured the donor community, which was well aware of the gap between the Agency's obligations and its resources. Her delegation praised the Agency's comprehensive humanitarian response to the situation in Gaza in 2014 as well as its longer-term agenda for reconstruction there. Australia had been a financial contributor to UNRWA since 1952; its contributions would total \$A 19.3 million by the end of the current financial year.

35. UNRWA was providing essential services to the Palestinian people. However, the future of Palestine refugees must ultimately be determined by a political solution. Australia remained committed to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine coexisting side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

36. Mr. Mminele (South Africa), commending UNRWA for its work to ensure protection, human development and humanitarian services throughout the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, said that the Agency was almost the only organization continuing to deliver basic services to Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in a context complicated by the continued illegal blockade. It had also had to intervene to attempt to mitigate the impact of the Syrian civil war and growing ISIL-caused instability on the displaced Palestinian population.

37. UNRWA would require sufficient and predictable funding to continue its important work. Unfortunately, funds provided by Member States had not kept pace with increasing needs on the ground, resulting in a large deficit in the Agency's core funding. Having relied on emergency donations, primarily from Arab States, to reopen its schools and vocational training centres in August 2015, the Agency had required further emergency donations to raise \$720 million to repair the damage caused by Israeli military action in Gaza in 2014. It had nevertheless made an effort to ensure cost-efficiency and effectiveness while delivering core essential services.

38. South Africa was deeply concerned about the worsening security and humanitarian conditions of Palestine refugees affected by the Syrian conflict and ISIL activities. It commended States hosting Palestinians, but noted with concern that those refugees were becoming increasingly marginalized in their host countries. The international community must work to address the worsening situation for Palestine refugees and support UNRWA and States in the region whose resources were being severely stretched by the tide of refugees fleeing war and persecution.

39. The Agency's mandate would continue until the achievement of a just and lasting peace, which must include the right of return and fair compensation on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a negotiated settlement of a two-State solution within internationally recognized borders based on those existing prior to 4 June 1967. South Africa urged donors to consistently provide the necessary financial support to the Agency.

40. Mr. Wongveerasin (Thailand) recognizing the courageous and crucial work carried out by UNRWA personnel, expressed condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives in the exercise of their duties in an increasingly challenging environment. He called on all parties to respect the civilian nature of refugee camps, facilitate access to humanitarian assistance for those in need and ensure the safety and security of UNRWA personnel.

41. The Agency's financial crisis had affected the operation of 700 schools and vocational training centres. Furthermore, significant funds were still required for the reconstruction of Gaza following the violence of 2014. Member States should provide

continued and sustained support to the Agency and respond more effectively to the needs of Palestine refugees. His Government had provided a modest but regular contribution since 1978 and had contributed \$100,000 to the Agency's flash appeal for Gaza and an additional \$100,000 to the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Thailand encouraged the parties concerned to make every effort to resolve the conflict and stood ready to support international efforts to bring lasting peace, security and prosperity to the region.

42. Mr. Shimizu (Japan) said that until Israel and an independent State of Palestine existed side-by-side in peace and security, UNRWA would continue to be a principal source of relief and services to Palestine refugees and a bulwark of stability in an increasingly volatile region. His delegation was concerned that such an important Agency was obliged to operate under recurring budgetary constraints and in increasingly dangerous conditions. Reiterating Japan's appreciation for the dedication and courage of UNRWA staff and expressing condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives in discharging their duties, he called on all concerned actors to facilitate the immediate release of staff members who were still missing or detained. In that regard, all parties should provide unfettered access and protection to the Agency and its staff in the implementation of its mandate.

43. Japan welcomed UNRWA's promising cost-efficiency measures and efforts to expand its donor base. He urged the Agency to continue to explore new funding sources, including international and regional financial institutions. However, he stressed that cost-cutting efforts should not come at the expense of essential relief operations and core services such as education.

44. His Government had contributed \$45 million in 2014 and an additional \$5.7 million in food in October 2015. It had also supported host countries bilaterally and through UNRWA. He reiterated his Government's appreciation for the efforts of those countries and encouraged them to keep their borders open to Palestine refugees fleeing conflict.

45. While the provision of basic services was essential, it was not the ultimate goal; the international community's assistance should also involve helping Palestinians to lead dignified and fulfilling lives. The educational opportunities of Palestinian children and youth must not be endangered by a lack of funds. Japan

would continue to contribute to education and employment initiatives and to promote development through such initiatives as the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development. Humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons must be allowed to pass more freely into Gaza, as the ongoing blockade was hindering reconstruction and exacting a heavy toll on economic prospects in the region. Japan would therefore continue to strengthen its cooperation with UNRWA, not only to provide humanitarian relief but also to help fulfil the aspirations of every refugee to peace, hope and dignity.

46. Mr. Al-Zayani (Bahrain) said that arbitrary measures and restrictions imposed by Israel, including forced evictions, the destruction of homes and economic assets, the separation wall, settler violence, the ongoing blockade of Gaza, and restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, had exacerbated the political, social and economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and hampered the ability of UNRWA to perform its duties.

47. Despite the Agency's ongoing attempts to overcome its financial difficulties by adopting innovative strategies and comprehensive reforms, including as part of the current medium-term strategy for 2016-2021, its long-accumulated deficit continued to threaten its core services. The Agency's current financial difficulties should not eclipse its many remarkable achievements to date, including its essential role in promoting dignity and stability in its fields of operation. He called for efforts to secure additional funding to allow the Agency to function effectively and expressed gratitude to all donors who had responded to its previous appeals for funding, in particular the Arab States that had made generous donations earlier that year to enable half a million Palestinian children to return to UNRWA schools.

48. The question of Palestine refugees was not only a humanitarian issue, but was intrinsically linked to the political conflict in the region. While the Agency played a vital role in providing assistance to Palestine refugees, it was powerless to reach a solution to their plight while they continued to be denied their legitimate right of return as recognized by General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

49. Mr. Habib (Indonesia) said that some Palestine refugees, who had been robbed of their homeland, were

now regrettably trapped in the prolonged conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. UNRWA's increasingly violent and unstable operating environment gave cause for great concern, and Indonesia reiterated its strong condemnation of the Israeli aggression in Gaza in 2014 that had resulted in damage to several UNRWA schools and education facilities and caused the deaths of a number of refugees and UNRWA officials. Noting that the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents in the Gaza Strip between 8 July 2014 and 26 August 2014 (S/2015/286) had not addressed the issue of accountability for those actions, he encouraged the international community to support Palestinian efforts to hold Israeli officials criminally accountable, in order to prevent the recurrence of such violations and to strengthen international commitment to the rule of law.

50. It was deeply regrettable that the Agency's unexpected financial difficulties had forced it to reduce its services to Palestine refugees, which could have a particularly negative impact on women, children and persons with disabilities. Indonesia therefore suggested that the Agency should assess the situation of the most vulnerable groups of refugees and determine the necessary response.

51. The funding shortage, in combination with armed conflict, instability and extremism in the Middle East, had caused the situation of Palestine refugees to deteriorate. The United Nations must become more proactive and intensify its efforts to bring peace and stability to the region. It should also address the continuing Israeli occupation, the root cause of the suffering of the Palestinian people. As the body primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the United Nations must, as a matter of urgency, establish the necessary conditions for the process towards the achievement of a just and lasting settlement based on the two-State solution. In the meantime, the international community should continue to provide support and assistance to UNRWA. Indonesia had long been a strong supporter of UNRWA and was also supporting Palestine through its participation in the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD), which was implementing programmes in the areas of tourism, agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprises and infrastructure in order to help Palestine prepare itself for statehood.

52. Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland) said that, with all five of its fields of operation affected by armed conflict or deteriorating humanitarian situations, UNRWA was faced with a situation that it was not tasked to address. The conflict in Syria had increased the humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in that country and caused thousands to become internally displaced or flee the country. Increasing numbers of children were becoming displaced, orphaned, or losing their lives trying to reach safety. It was estimated that over 3 million children in Syria alone were unable to attend school. Under those extremely difficult circumstances, the assistance and protection provided by courageous UNRWA staff were more important than ever. He also commended countries in the region that had taken in the majority of refugees fleeing Syria. For its part, his Government had allocated an additional \$16 million to support the work of the United Nations on the ground and to welcome increased numbers of refugees to Iceland.

53. The Agency's reliable education, health, relief, social and infrastructure development services were providing a measure of stability in a region consumed by armed conflict, growing extremism and increasing security threats, and giving hope and dignity to millions of young people. Iceland especially commended UNRWA's efforts to improve the lives of women and youth among the Palestine refugee population.

54. The Agency's continuing financial instability was compounding its difficulties. UNRWA would continue to be desperately needed until a just and lasting solution was found to the question of the refugees. In the meantime, the international community must make every effort to honour its responsibilities towards that population. His Government would continue to support UNRWA and encouraged other Member States to do likewise.

55. Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana) said that his country attached great importance to the principle of self-determination and, therefore, remained deeply concerned that the Palestinian people continued to be denied their inalienable right to independence, which undermined the noble principles on which the United Nations was founded. His delegation remained convinced that there was no alternative to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine coexisting side-by-side as two sovereign States.

56. His delegation deplored the continuing human rights violations taking place in the Middle East, in particular between Israelis and Palestinians, leading to the loss of many innocent lives and leaving thousands of innocent people without homes, access to basic amenities, or hope for the future. He commended the efforts of UNRWA in providing humanitarian assistance to more than 5 million Palestine refugees in the occupied territories despite financial and resource challenges. Member States and the United Nations system were providing admirable support to ensure the continued operation of the Agency. Botswana also welcomed the continued efforts of the Secretary-General, the Quartet and the Security Council for their efforts to facilitate the peace process. While those efforts should be fully supported by all States, Israel and Palestine must also demonstrate the will to shape their own future and put an end to the protracted conflict. He therefore encouraged them to resume negotiations, in a spirit of compromise and mutual respect, with a view to achieving a lasting solution.

57. He called for an end to the horrific and dehumanizing living conditions that innocent Palestinian civilians continued to endure and that had driven millions to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, and paid tribute to the sacrifices of UNRWA staff working to improve the lives of Palestine refugees in very difficult and dangerous circumstances.

58. Mr. Prasad (India) said that, 65 years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), an amicable solution to the Palestine question unfortunately had not been found. Instead, the problem had worsened over time, and UNRWA was facing unprecedented operational challenges. Given the uncertainty and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, the Agency's critical assistance to the Palestine refugees had assumed even greater significance. Its continued and dedicated pursuit of its mandate had come to epitomize the international community's commitment to the well-being of the Palestine refugees. That it did so under extremely difficult conditions was all the more admirable. That commitment included providing emergency assistance to more than 1.3 million Palestine refugees in acute distress as a result of armed conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in neighbouring countries. India also acknowledged and commended the invaluable cooperation of host countries.

59. His delegation supported a negotiated solution for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, within secure and recognized borders, side-by-side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. His country's political support for the Palestinian people, highlighted by the recent inaugural visit of the Indian President to Palestine, was matched by its consistent technical and financial assistance for development and nation-building efforts. The President had announced more scholarships for Palestinian students under the flagship Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, inaugurated the India-Palestine Centre for Excellence in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Al-Quds University, and donated \$5 million as budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. As part of the country's larger capacity-building initiatives in Palestine, there were plans to establish another ICT centre in Gaza, an IT park in Ramallah and a Palestinian Institute of Diplomacy, at an estimated cost of \$1 million, \$12 million and \$4.5 million respectively. India continued to contribute \$1 million annually to UNRWA and had fulfilled its pledge of \$4 million to the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza. Furthermore, it was jointly implementing development projects in Palestine with Brazil and South Africa, and had pledged \$1 million for a new project to reconstruct the Atta Habib medical centre in Gaza.

60. Dialogue was the only viable option in the search for a just, durable and comprehensive peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue. Diplomacy and statesmanship had to prevail over hatred and violence; there was no other road to a lasting peace. All parties should show restraint to avoid provocation and unilateral actions and resume the peace process.

61. Mr. AlKhubalal (Kuwait) said that Israel, the occupying Power, bore primary responsibility for the tragic situation of the Palestine refugees. It had systematically destroyed Palestinian infrastructure and continued to violate the Palestinian people's most fundamental human rights. During its military assault on Gaza in July 2014, Israel had killed and injured thousands of Palestinian civilians, most of them women and children, destroyed buildings and infrastructure and forced vast numbers of Palestinians to flee their homes and seek refuge in UNRWA

facilities, many of which had also been targeted by Israeli attacks. Israel continued to expand settlements, its security forces used live ammunition in crowded civilian areas and settler violence remained unpunished, including attacks such as that of 31 July 2015, when the home of a Palestinian family in Nablus was deliberately set on fire, killing a young infant and other family members. The international community must take immediate and decisive action to compel Israel to stop obstructing the Agency's vital work and lift its Gaza blockade in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The international community must also refrain from applying double standards and fulfil its moral and political duty to hold Israel accountable for its crimes.

62. The Agency's financial difficulties posed a serious threat to the future of its operations. While his delegation appreciated the Agency's efforts to streamline expenditure, it was concerned about the potential effect of such measures on the level of service the Agency provided. All States must continue to support UNRWA's valuable work, which contributed to regional stability.

63. Kuwait remained fully committed to UNRWA; it had increased its annual contribution to \$2 million in 2011 and made additional donations amounting to tens of millions of dollars to support the Agency's response to the ongoing humanitarian crises in Gaza and the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2014, Kuwait had pledged \$200 million to support reconstruction in Gaza over a period of three years, and in 2015 it had donated an additional \$15 million to fund the reopening of UNRWA schools. His Government reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for their inalienable rights.

64. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) commended the tireless dedication and hard work of the Commissioner-General and the staff members of UNRWA to improve the conditions of Palestine refugees, despite extreme circumstances and constraints, and expressed its deepest sympathy to the families of staff members killed in the line of duty.

65. The serious shortfall in the General Fund must be addressed urgently. Support for UNRWA during its unprecedented financial crisis in August 2015 had been heartening; the international community's noble commitment to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of children and young people enrolled in the Agency's 685 schools and 8 vocational training centres continued

to enjoy the basic right to education must be sustained. Malaysia, as a non-traditional donor, remained firmly committed to assisting the Palestine refugees through its regular and one-time contributions to UNRWA and supported the Agency's efforts to mobilize contributions from the international community. All Member States must increase and sustain their contributions to the Agency's work.

66. Despite the outpouring of support, the recent extreme violence and hostilities in East Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank continued to stifle livelihoods in Gaza and prevented the entry of much-needed construction materials as well as hampering care and support for women, orphaned children and persons with disabilities. The deliberate worsening of conditions by the occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, threatened the very survival of the Palestinian people, including Palestine refugees sheltered in UNRWA camps. Malaysia called once again for an end to the blockade and the lifting of restrictions on the movement of UNRWA personnel and goods in the West Bank and Gaza, which continued to undermine the Agency's execution of its mandate. The international community must exhort all those responsible to act urgently to remove the restrictions in accordance with international law and agreements among UNRWA, the State of Palestine and Israel.

67. The humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to provoke grave concern, particularly with regard to the hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees under the Agency's care. The important role of UNRWA in forestalling a more alarming humanitarian disaster in that country deserved the full support of the international community. The Agency's vital work tangibly demonstrated the ongoing concern and sympathy for the plight of Palestine refugees deprived of justice, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Despite many operational challenges, UNRWA had done much to improve the lives of the Palestine refugees in Gaza and the West Bank and in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It was the shared responsibility of the international community to provide the resources needed for the Agency to fulfil its mandate effectively.

68. **Mr. Bosah** (Nigeria), noting that since its inception UNRWA had been providing, within the limits of its meagre resources, basic humanitarian services to an increasing population of Palestine

refugees, said that the prolonged armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic not only exacerbated the difficulties of the refugees there, but also placed additional pressures on the Agency's resources. With Palestine refugees in the Near East facing high levels of food insecurity, unemployment and poverty, Nigeria applauded the Agency's offer of full-time employment to some 30,000 refugees as a means of injecting income into local communities.

69. Given that most of the Agency's funds came from voluntary contributions, its ability to fulfil its mandate was severely affected by the gross funding shortfall. Limited financial resources undermined UNRWA programmes in such critical sectors as health, education, social services, and emergency response. Nigeria welcomed the Agency's commitment to manage costs while retaining its capacity to achieve its strategic objectives with maximum impact within its resources, and without compromising essential services. The Agency's fundraising efforts, including the Commissioner-General's proposal to explore avenues for more sustainable funding, were also appreciated. His delegation endorsed the UNRWA Resource Mobilization Strategy for 2012-2015 which aimed to deepen partnerships with traditional donors and to improve cross-Agency capacity to mobilize resources and manage donor relations.

70. Through the resolute commitment and tireless efforts of its staff, UNRWA had notably continued to deliver on its mandate despite its huge financial challenges. While donors and other agencies had already contributed much, it was critical to work collectively to ensure that UNRWA received the funding necessary to maintain its operations and continue providing humanitarian services.

71. Mr. Djacta (Algeria), thanking the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for his remarkable work and the quality and objectivity of his reports and staff, expressed profound concern at the scope of the Agency's persistent financial problem, whose only victims were those who lived in overpopulated camps with the collective memory of a nation they had been forced to abandon. The United Nations had established UNRWA in an attempt to expunge its direct responsibility for the exodus of Palestinians with a mandate to assist those whom Israel had forced into exile, denying them their livelihood and dignity as free human beings. His country valued and supported the Agency, whose essential mandate to provide

humanitarian assistance and technical support to Palestine refugees in the Occupied Territories and in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria must be preserved. Its operational capacity must be developed until the achievement of a just and lasting solution to the plight of Palestine refugees, including the right of return and the right to compensation pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 and subsequent resolutions.

72. He reiterated his delegation's deep concern over the critical situation of Palestine refugees as documented in the Commissioner-General's report. The negative effect of the occupation on the daily lives of refugees continued, as they faced existential threats and sank deeper into poverty and depression. The Agency's work to address poverty, health care and other development issues merited support, for a weakened UNRWA would not only destabilize a region in turmoil, but would also contradict the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The unprecedented and inhumane Israeli blockade had already crippled the Gazan economy and affected the lives of its civilian population. Furthermore, by continuing to prevent UNRWA personnel from discharging their duties and systematically restricting the movement of people and goods needed for the reconstruction of thousands of homes and buildings destroyed by its aggressions, Israel perpetuated dependence on UNRWA. Algeria also expressed concern with regard to the situation of Palestine refugees in Syria.

73. The Agency's budget shortfall undermined its efforts to meet refugees' needs. Its financial viability was a collective responsibility, and until a just and lasting solution to the plight of Palestine refugees was achieved, donors must deliver and remain committed to ensuring that the Agency was able to fulfil its mandate. He also called on the international community to intensify efforts to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, put an end to the Israeli occupation, and find a just solution for the Palestine refugee problem in line with the principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

74. Mr. Almahmoud (United Arab Emirates) commended UNRWA personnel for their dedicated efforts to provide basic services to Palestine refugees, who continued to endure immense suffering under the Israeli occupation. The Agency's current unprecedented budget shortfall of \$101 million severely inhibited its ability to deal with the rising numbers of refugees and

the deteriorating humanitarian situation, exacerbated by Israel's deliberate destruction of Palestinians' homes and confiscation of their property, and by the deliberate targeting of refugee camps in Syria. Of particular concern was the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Yarmouk camp, the majority of whose inhabitants had been displaced, and where those who remained continued to suffer flagrant violations of international law, including an unjust blockade and frequent acts of terrorism.

75. His Government called on the United Nations to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, compel Israel to respect its obligations under international agreements, hold Israel accountable for its crimes and provide the necessary protection to Palestine refugees. It also urged the international community, in particular donor States and financial institutions, to increase their financial contributions to UNRWA to enable it to fulfil its crucial functions.

76. The United Arab Emirates was a long-standing donor of regular and emergency assistance to UNRWA. Its annual contribution was \$1.8 million; it had donated an additional \$15 million in response to the Agency's funding crisis to ensure that UNRWA schools were not forced to delay the start of the 2015 academic year. It had also been the third biggest donor in response to the emergency appeal in Syria in 2014. In addition to providing financial support, the Emirates had joined the UNRWA Advisory Commission and the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcment of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA, set up an air bridge to deliver in-kind assistance to refugees affected by the 2014 Gaza conflict, pledged \$200 million at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, hosted a regional conference on protecting refugee children in the Middle East and North Africa, and cooperated with UNRWA in launching an education programme to help children in Gaza to deal with the psychological effects of war.

77. His Government reaffirmed the need to continue the Agency's mandate and stressed that the problem of Palestine refugees could only be fundamentally resolved by compelling Israel to abide by international law, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III). To conclude, he paid tribute to UNRWA staff, in particular those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

78. Mr. Carroll (Observer for the Holy See), extending condolences to the families of UNRWA staff killed while providing humanitarian aid to the victims of conflict and political turmoil or injured in the line of duty, said that reports on the issues confronting UNRWA painted a very troubling picture. The areas under the Agency's responsibility included territories where Christians had been part and parcel of the culture and history of the region for two millennia. Greatly reduced in number, and forced to leave their homes by violent persecution and the harsh geopolitical realities of the region, they were among the refugees served by UNRWA. Like UNRWA, the Catholic Church provided — through a number of its bodies and the support of generous donors — education, health-care and social services to internally displaced persons and refugees, and rehabilitation for those traumatized by incessant conflict, all on the basis of need, not creed.

79. Resources that did not match ever-increasing needs; a stalled peace process between Israel and Palestine; and ever-increasing tensions and violence in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem were issues of grave concern to the Holy See. The Holy City of Jerusalem was the spiritual patrimony of the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. His delegation, therefore, renewed its support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem, ensuring, *inter alia*, the freedom of religion and conscience of its inhabitants, as well as free and unhindered access to the holy places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities.

80. In the Syrian Arab Republic, where education and health-care facilities were being targeted by warring parties, some children had been unable to attend school for two or three years because of the use and abuse of schools by all parties, and as the number of injured victims increased, the number of facilities to care for them diminished. Some refugee camps, such as Yarmouk, were literally under siege with limited access to basic human needs, and Palestine refugees must flee again. The reports gave no hope of an expedient end to the many barbaric acts against the Palestine refugees.

81. He reiterated with appreciation, however, the enduring collaboration of Lebanon and Jordan with UNRWA and commended them, together with Turkey and some European countries, for dealing with the influx of refugees from both Iraq and Syria. Lebanon,

in particular, needed support from the international community to stabilize its institutions, protect its citizens and tend to some 1.5 million refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. Jordan, long a beacon in the acceptance of refugees, required international assistance to tend to refugees and to guarantee security and social cohesion for its own people, fending off the spiral of violence that terrorist and extremist groups sought to inflict.

82. Peacemaking must replace the counterproductive illogic of violence and war. Accessible humanitarian assistance for refugees and internally displaced persons must replace the current influx of weapons into the region from all over the globe. The hope must never die that peace would eventually take root in a land significant to all and sacred to many.

83. Mr. Krähenbühl (Commissioner-General of UNRWA) welcomed the support voiced and demonstrated by United Nations Member States, hosts and donor countries, and commended the Chair and Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for the report. The recognition of the Agency's important humanitarian assistance, development work and investment in human capital, and of its strategic approach to operations and financing were appreciated. He also welcomed the recognition of the role, courage and determination of staff and the security issues and threats they faced in Gaza or the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the resolution adopted on safety and security, which also took into account locally recruited or Palestinian staff who did not fall under the responsibility of the Department of Safety and Security.

84. It was true that the financial shortfall that UNRWA had overcome — with the help of many delegations — should never occur again, and that States had an individual and collective responsibility in that regard. Reiterating that UNRWA would have to undertake serious reform and Member States should continue to provide diplomatic and financial support for the Agency to address the many needs of the Palestine refugees, he also stressed that UNRWA's ongoing assistance could not be a substitute for the essential solutions required, and that while it would continue to provide education in its 685 schools, youth unemployment remained a key factor to be addressed in more innovative ways.

85. He would continue the important bilateral dialogue in which, despite the many areas of

disagreement that might exist between the State of Israel and the Agency, issues could be addressed in sustained and in-depth conversations at various levels. At the same time, regarding the query by the Israeli representative about the high number of refugees registered by the Agency, it was important to note that UNRWA defined refugee status so differently from other agencies. While family members of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan or the Islamic Republic of Iran were also entitled to refugee status, the difference was that, unlike Palestinians, they had a country to which they could return; that right, enshrined in resolution 194, continued to elude Palestine refugees. The Agency's work towards a just and lasting solution that was part of a political process, and included the return of refugees to their place of origin, was in line with the approach of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

86. He also emphasized that the Agency had no difficulty in addressing the role and activities of Hamas. During the 2014 conflict, he had condemned the firing of rockets on Israeli cities and civilians, not from the relative safety of his apartment in East Jerusalem, but from Gaza itself. The idea that UNRWA relegated or minimized the suffering of Palestine refugees in any one situation was foreign to him. He had never hesitated to condemn the Yarmouk camp incidents, nor would he hesitate to condemn the consequences of the siege imposed on Yarmouk or the actions of armed groups inside the camp. The true strength of international law and international humanitarian law resided not so much in the effort of any one State to impugn others, as in how seriously it applied international law domestically. Accountability began at home, and that would apply equally to the State of Israel with regard to its responsibilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He repeated that the enquiries into the allegations concerning inappropriate content and statements posted by UNRWA staff on social media were ongoing. The Agency unambiguously condemned any form of anti-Semitism or racism and would conclude its investigations into the matter, taking disciplinary action where appropriate. In the same way, the Agency looked forward to the conclusions of the investigations carried out by the State of Israel into numerous incidents affecting Palestine refugees that had occurred during the conflict in Gaza and in 2015 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

87. He fully concurred with the many representatives who had stated that the need for a political solution was central to the issue. He stressed, however, that it was not the frequency of such statements or of references to the importance of a two-State solution, but political action on the ground that was needed to lead to concrete changes. Notwithstanding comments that had been made, UNRWA had no political mandate. It was vital to understand that nothing would address the frustrations, despair and anger that were currently visible in many parts of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza if political action were not pushed forward. The Agency would continue to advocate in that regard and remain dedicated to its humanitarian and development mandate because it was confronted daily with the human cost of political inaction that had endured for far too long. Many dreamed of a world in which UNRWA was not needed, but the wide show of support for the Agency's activities sent a message of solidarity to Palestine refugees and reaffirmed its mandate. He urged delegations to bear in mind that supporting UNRWA was providing a measure of hope, dignity and stability to the region. Quoting from a poem on hope and happiness by a young girl from Gaza, he said that it was important to remember that, behind the statistics, Palestine refugees, in particular children, shared the same hopes for dignity and humanity as children everywhere.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

88. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation must first reiterate that the right of return was precisely that — a right, not a claim. That irrevocable right, enshrined in resolution 194, was based on international law and the principles of justice and equality. The rights of Palestinians were no different from those of any other refugees: it would be unimaginable to refuse the right of a certain group of refugees to return on the grounds that they did not belong to a specific religion or ethnic group. Such a position was incompatible with her delegation's understanding of human rights and justice, an understanding which was widely shared, as evidenced by the Committee's discussions. The Israeli Government's rejectionist rhetoric and intransigence on that point were at the core of the continuing conflict. However, despite the rejection, oppression or humiliation to which the Palestinian people had been subjected in the 67 years since Al-Nakba and over two decades of

negotiations, they would never be forced into forgoing their rights.

89. Second, the Israeli Government must understand that rights and security were not exclusive to Israel and that it was not a zero-sum game. Without fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people, peace and security would remain elusive. International law, including humanitarian and human-rights law, and United Nations resolutions were therefore the basis for any just and lasting solution. The term "no preconditions" was an attempt to detach negotiations from international law and any framework that could possibly ensure justice and, thus, a viable peace. If the demand for preconditions was considered an obstruction of peace, then it was not just Palestine, but the entire international community that was mistaken.

90. Third, UNRWA did not promote a so-called "one-sided narrative"; its mandate, conferred by the General Assembly, was clear and based on international humanitarian and human-rights law. That had been broadly and firmly recognized in statement after statement before the Committee, in the many welcome expressions of support for the Agency and for the 5.5 million Palestine refugees registered with it.

91. Lastly, her delegation would submit that the question of Palestine, including the Palestine refugee question, was the moral-justice issue of the day. To minimize it would be to ignore and belittle how deeply the issue resonated around the world and how relevant a just, peaceful solution was, not just for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and the wider region, but for the international community and for the viability of the international system as a whole.

92. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Yarmouk camp was not under blockade by the Syrian Government; that fact had been confirmed by the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/20/37) and by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in a statement before the Security Council. Yarmouk camp had in fact been blockaded internally by terrorist groups, which had stormed the camp and provoked instability there for decades.

93. It was ridiculous for the representative of Israel to comment on human rights, peace or the situation of Palestine refugees when Israel bore sole responsibility for their misery; it had massacred and forcibly

displaced vast numbers of Palestinians and continued to terrorize them on a daily basis, denying them even their most basic rights, including the right of return. In the Gaza Strip, Israel obstructed the entry of humanitarian assistance, maintained its unjust and inhumane blockade and had carried out devastating attacks on places of refuge, including UNRWA facilities, killing Agency staff and many innocent civilians.

94. The representative of Israel, having listened to a torrent of international condemnation of the Israeli Government throughout the debate on the current agenda item, had regrettably resorted to making his usual defamatory accusations against the Syrian Government in a futile bid to divert attention from the war crimes committed daily by the Israeli Government in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

95. If the representative of Israel were genuinely concerned about the situation of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, rather than shedding false tears at the United Nations, he should simply request his Government to allow Palestinians to exercise their right of return, end its occupation of Palestine and stop providing support to terrorist groups such as the Nuḍra Front that were active in the separation area in the occupied Syrian Golan, as reported by the Secretary General in his most recent report on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) (S/2015/699), particularly since those were the same terrorist groups that had invaded Yarmouk camp.

Agenda item 53: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (continued)
(A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1, A/C.4/70/L.13 and A/C.4/70/L.13/Corr.1)

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1: Matters relating to activities under the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in 2016

96. The Chair invited the Committee to resume its consideration of item 53 and to take action on the remaining draft resolution under that item. He recalled that at the fifteenth meeting of the Committee, the representative of the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space had reported on the discussions in that Group, including on discussions relating to draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1. A statement on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution

had been issued as documents A/C.4/70/L.13 and A/C.4/70/L.13/Corr.1.

97. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1 was adopted.*

98. Mr. Shimizu (Japan) said that his delegation had been pleased to join the consensus on the resolution. As a strong supporter of international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space, Japan fully understood the benefits of capacity-building activities under the United Nations programme. However, his delegation regretted the programme budget implications of the resolution and the lack of clarity on the budget throughout the process. Japan hoped that upcoming discussions in the Fifth Committee would provide an opportunity to shed further light on the issue.

99. Mr. Testot (France) said that his delegation associated itself with the position of the previous speaker, as France had always supported international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space and the omnibus resolutions adopted every year on that agenda item. The confusion surrounding the current programme budget implications was, therefore, regrettable. France took note of the Secretariat's welcome efforts to elucidate the matter during and after discussions in the Committee and hoped that its subsequent consideration in the Fifth Committee would lead to further clarification, including on the possible reprioritization of seminars for the biennium 2016-2017.

100. Mr. Sherry (United Kingdom) expressed his delegation's concern regarding the lack of clarity in discussions on future and past workshops and the subsequent need for additional resources. He also expressed concern that there had been no attempt to reprioritize activity for the upcoming biennium within a budget that had not yet even been adopted, even though the budget proposal included provisions for 11 workshops, the locations of which were yet to be decided. The adoption of the draft resolution in no way prejudged discussion in the Fifth Committee of the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the next biennium.

101. Mr. Ordeman (United States), voicing his country's support for the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), including the four workshops listed in the draft resolution, said that he wished to remind the Committee that all of the complications surrounding the resolution — including the added work undertaken by the Secretariat, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the

sponsor of the draft resolution — had been the result of the efforts by some to politicize the work of COPUOS. The unnecessary politicization of a technical committee had led to the reallocation of the funds earmarked for those workshops in the current biennium and had incurred programme budget implications for the upcoming biennium because those activities had not been included in the resolution that had been adopted without programme budget implications.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.



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Seventieth session

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Summary record of the 23rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bowler (Malawi)

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Agenda item 55: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 55: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/70/133, A/70/312, A/70/341, A/70/351, A/70/406, A/70/406/Corr.1 and A/70/421)

1. Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and introducing its report (A/70/406) examining the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, said that the report contained information gathered during the Special Committee's visit to Amman in 2015. Regrettably, the Government of Israel, as in previous years, had failed to respond to requests to meet with the Special Committee and allow access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During the visit, the Special Committee had been briefed on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the occupied Syrian Golan by civil society representatives, victims and witnesses of Israeli violations, and Palestinian and United Nations officials. A number of concerns which constituted important elements of the background to the serious escalation of violence had been brought to the attention of the Special Committee.

2. Settlement activity had been continuing in both the Occupied Palestinian Territories — where expansion had been aided and abetted by restrictive planning policies for Palestinians, demolition orders on "illegal" Palestinian homes, settler violence, and legislation to confiscate private Palestinian property — and the occupied Syrian Golan, where financial incentives of up to \$12,000 were offered to Israeli families settling there for a minimum of five years. The Committee had been dismayed to hear that settler violence continued to be the daily Palestinian reality. The arson attack by settlers in Duma that had resulted in the death of an 18-month-old baby and his father, which had received international condemnation, had been but one emblematic incident in a widespread and continuing phenomenon. It had been evident from the testimonies that the root cause of the escalating violence was the continuing policy of settlement expansion and the climate of impunity relating to the activities of the settlers. There was only a slim chance

that a complaint filed by a Palestinian against Israeli settlers would lead to an effective investigation, with the identification of a suspect, followed by indictment, trial and conviction.

3. The report also cited disturbing testimony on numerous cases of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces, including with live ammunition. From January to August 2015, 18 Palestinians had reportedly been killed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank; that number had more than tripled since then and excessive use of force by Israeli security forces had contributed to — and exacerbated — the spiralling cycle of deadly violence across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. There were moving accounts from young Palestinians who had been shot and injured while posing no danger to Israeli security forces. Other similar cases, including the more recent and all-too-frequent killings of Palestinians, raised serious questions regarding the guidelines and instructions issued by the Israeli authorities. In that regard, the Special Committee called on Israel to take immediate steps to ensure compliance with international standards for law enforcement and accountability for excessive use of force by Israeli security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Recent news reports indicated that fresh rounds of violence had resulted in death and injury to civilians on both sides.

4. The recent escalation in tensions surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque had also been brought to the attention of the Committee. Civil society representatives had noted that underlying the tensions were the entry restrictions imposed on Palestinians and provocation by Jewish people allowed entry to the Al-Aqsa compound. Concerns had also been expressed regarding archaeological excavation work undertaken around the site, in a reportedly deliberate attempt to undermine the structural foundations of the Mosque. The report called on Israel to lift all movement restrictions within East Jerusalem, and to cease immediately the potentially harmful excavation works beneath or near the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

5. The situation of Palestinian detainees remained a serious concern. In August 2015, an estimated 5,000 Palestinian detainees had been held in Israeli custody, including 160 minors, 26 women, and 7 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and 400 Palestinians were being held indefinitely under administrative detention without charge or trial. Administrative detention was only exceptionally permitted for short

periods of time under international law, but in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, it remained the norm. The Committee shared the concern of civil society that the 99 per cent conviction rate for Palestinians arrested by Israeli security forces cast doubt on the application of the principles of the presumption of innocence and due process. In most cases of arrest and detention of minors, the charges were alleged stone-throwing during demonstrations. Disturbingly, the recent amendment to the Penal Code increased the maximum sentence for throwing stones or other objects at vehicles from 10 to 20 years; the harsher sentences would likely affect Palestinian youth most. Ill-treatment, torture, and medical neglect of detainees, including women and children, remained a serious issue. Detainees had been subjected to regular beatings, electric shocks, solitary confinement, and the use of police dogs to intimidate and quell protests inside prisons. The Special Committee was also concerned by a number of measures adopted in 2015 that further undermined the rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories, such as a law permitting the force-feeding of prisoners on hunger strike and the approval by the Israeli Supreme Court of application of the Absentee Property Law of 1950, which provided for the confiscation of property and assets in occupied East Jerusalem when owners resided in the West Bank or Gaza.

6. As in previous years, the Special Committee had reported on the role of companies that did business with settlements and profited from their maintenance or construction or the exploitation of natural resources in the occupied West Bank or the occupied Syrian Golan. There was a growing awareness among companies of the potential financial, legal and reputational risks of doing business in occupied territories. Submissions made to the Committee listed a number of Israeli and international institutions, including banks. The Special Committee hoped to maintain the growing awareness among companies of the potential financial, legal and reputational risks of doing business in occupied territories. It also called upon Member States to review national policies, legislation, regulations and enforcement measures related to business activity to ensure that they effectively prevented and addressed the risk of human rights abuses in conflict-affected areas. The international community must also ensure that corporations respected human rights and ceased to fund or enter into commercial transactions with organizations and bodies

involved in settlements or exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the occupied Syrian Golan.

7. The report also covered the situation in Gaza, including the lack of accountability and right to legal remedies, the enforcement of the access-restricted areas by Israeli security forces and the slow pace of reconstruction efforts following the hostilities in the summer of 2014. According to information received by the Special Committee, Israeli Naval Forces had fired live ammunition in 91 incidents, killing 14 Palestinian fishermen between January and June 2015 in access-restricted areas at sea. Fishermen had also reportedly been humiliated by being forced to undress and swim from their boats to naval vessels in order to be arrested. While the precise area of access-restricted areas both on land and at sea was unclear, up to 35 per cent of agricultural land in Gaza, and as much as 85 per cent of its fishing waters had been affected over time. Furthermore, one year after the deadly war in Gaza, reconstruction lagged considerably because of a lack of funds and the continuing Israeli blockade. As of August 2015, only one third of the \$4 billion pledged by the international community for the reconstruction of Gaza had been disbursed. Over 100,000 Palestinians remained displaced, living in precarious conditions with little access to basic services. The blockade of Gaza continued to be a key obstacle to the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights of Palestinians. It was imperative for the international community to use its influence to end the blockade and for donor countries to honour the pledges made and to disburse funds for reconstruction urgently.

8. The Special Committee had found that the human rights situation in the occupied territories continued to deteriorate. The stalled peace process, the issues already mentioned and the lack of opportunities for a better life had created an explosive mix, escalating the cycle of violence. Any attempt to calm the deadly tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the holy site, must be grounded in respect for human rights. Sustainable peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike could be achieved only if there was real accountability and the root causes of the conflict were addressed.

9. Mr. Radcliffe (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), introducing five reports of the Secretary-General under agenda item 55, said that the report on the work of the

Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/70/341) outlined the activities of the Special Committee and the Department of Public Information in support of the Special Committee's work.

10. The report on the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories (A/70/133) summarized the replies received from Brazil, Cuba, Ireland, Qatar, Switzerland and Turkey to a request for information on the steps taken or envisaged to implement General Assembly resolution 69/91. It included information on the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention and the adoption of a ten-point declaration.

11. The report on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/70/351) contained information from a variety of sources, including OHCHR and other United Nations entities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The report concluded that settlement-related activities were at the core of most of the human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and that settlement expansion, including through retroactive legalization of outposts under Israeli law and in stark contravention of international law, was a significant obstacle to the right to self-determination. The report also examined human rights violations linked to the settlements, and the detrimental impact of settlements on efforts towards sustainable peace on the basis of a two-State solution. It also included an update on Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Syrian Golan.

12. The report of the Secretary-General on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/70/421), focused on the increase in violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from June to August 2014; the situation in Gaza, one year after the ceasefire; the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; accountability; and treaty accession by the State of Palestine. The report covered the 2014 escalation of hostilities and violence in the West Bank and related human rights violations and

provided an overall picture of the scale of the ensuing destruction, displacement and humanitarian needs.

13. Lastly, the report on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/70/312) was a compilation of the replies received from the Syrian Arab Republic, Brazil and Cuba to a request for information on steps taken to implement General Assembly resolution 69/94.

14. Mr. Hamed (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the exploitation by Israel of natural resources in the occupied territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, was in flagrant violation of international law and asked what Member States could do to implement the Special Committee's recommendations on that matter.

15. Mr. Suleman (Pakistan) asked whether the routine violent nocturnal searches and arrests continued in the Occupied Palestine Territory, including East Jerusalem, where Israeli Forces had been documented breaking into homes and physically restraining and blindfolding innocent Palestinians, including children, to take them away for detention. Many had testified to the trauma and loss of dignity related to such raids and subsequent interrogations, during which police dogs and weapons were used. He asked the Chair of the Special Committee to elaborate on the physical and psychological effects of those raids, in particular on innocent women and children.

16. Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the many reports by United Nations entities attested to a systematic pattern of gross human rights violations being perpetrated by the occupying Power, its occupying forces and settlers against the Palestinian people over close to fifty years of foreign military occupation, itself deemed a massive human rights violation that should be considered illegal in its entirety. Israel continued its abhorrent practice of forcibly detaining, interrogating and imprisoning Palestinian children, including boys as young as fourteen years old, and was the only country to prosecute children in military courts. She asked what specific observations the Special Committee had made regarding that illegal practice — an issue already raised by the Special Committee and other United Nations bodies — and whether it had any recommendations for a remedy.

17. Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee, recalled that in chapter V of its report (A/70/406), the Special Committee had

proposed a number of recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly. Furthermore, in paragraph 89 the Special Committee called on the international community to undertake certain measures. With regard to the use of resources by corporations and entities within occupied territories, the Special Committee had given due attention to the detailed written and oral testimony it had received on the matter and the relevant recommendations were found in paragraphs 89 (e) and (f). The Special Committee shared the concerns on the issue of night-time raids — in particular their impact on women and children, which was reflected in school drop-out rates — and had made a recommendation in paragraph 89 (k). With regard to the continuing forcible detention of Palestinians, the Special Committee had dealt with that issue extensively in paragraphs 50 to 57 of the report and the related recommendations were contained in paragraph 88 (m).

18. Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that there was a human rights crisis in Palestine, as affirmed by documented facts and countless reports by the United Nations and other international organizations monitoring the situation on the objective basis of international law. Every aspect of life was infringed upon and every human right was being violated as Israel continued to subjugate the Palestinian people and entrench its occupation. The campaign of military aggression, detention and forced displacement of civilians, destruction and confiscation of homes and land, and the rabid construction and expansion of settlements, movement restrictions, evictions, exploitation of natural resources and provocation concerning the Haram al-Sharif sought to deny systematically the history, rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people, while criminalizing their legitimate resistance to occupation. Those actions aimed, unsuccessfully, to legitimize the blatantly illegal occupation, exacerbating prejudice, paranoia, and extremism and undermining peace as well as international law and the international system as a whole.

19. Israeli human rights violations had intensified in 2015, with devastating consequences for Palestinian society. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, physically precluded the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. Far from being de-escalated, the situation remained critical. The

cultivation of a culture of hate had been exhibited in the shameful words and actions of an Israeli soldier who had been filmed threatening to kill all residents in the Aida Palestine refugee camp in Bethlehem. Such shocking threats, used to subjugate and dispossess the Palestinian population in grave breach of international law, were not isolated. They were the same threats, policies and measures manifested in the routine intimidation and harassment of Palestinian civilians at checkpoints; in the forcible detention and inhumane treatment — even torture — of thousands of Palestinian prisoners, including children, in Israeli jails; and in the savagery of the war in Gaza in 2014, during which Israeli forces had slaughtered more than 2,000 Palestinians, among them hundreds of women and children, and deliberately destroyed homes and properties. They were the same threats, policies and measures that underpinned the illegal, inhumane blockade of Gaza, inflicting collective punishment on the entire civilian population there; that drove the illegal settlements and associated violations; and that fuelled religious provocation and settler violence, carried out with total impunity and with the protection and support of the Israeli Government and occupying forces.

20. The provisions of international law prohibiting all those actions were clear and were applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as confirmed by the General Assembly, Security Council, Human Rights Council and International Court of Justice, and the Conferences of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. Attempts to dispute or distort those facts were directly negated by reality. Continued appeasement or silence could not be justified. Respect for human rights could not be conditioned on the resolution of conflict; they must be respected in all circumstances. Failure to hold Israel accountable for its human rights violations and crimes would only embolden it to continue trampling the law, causing more suffering, compounding the crisis, and making peace even more elusive. The international community must demand that Israel should cease its violations and comply with the law. For, while those illegal actions continued, how could Palestinians believe that Israel sought peace, would put an end to the illegal foreign occupation and was committed to the two-State solution? More than lip service, action was needed to answer those very real questions and prove the Israeli authorities' commitment.

21. Until the reality on the ground improved, her delegation would continue to call for international protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with international law, as their suffering was the direct result of Israeli occupation and occupiers. The international community, in particular the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, had clear responsibilities in that regard. The call for protection must not be viewed as unreasonable or unimaginable by any party that respected international law and human rights and sought peace. Citing the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who had called for protection for the people of the occupied territories at the 2001 Conference of High Contracting Parties, she said that that appeal remained applicable and indeed had become more urgent than ever. She implored the international community to rise to the challenge and act to protect innocent civilians, uphold human rights and salvage the prospects for a just and lasting peace.

22. Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the Movement was deeply concerned that Israel had prevented the Special Committee from holding consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities and from gaining access to the occupied territories in line with its mandate. It strongly condemned the refusal of Israel to give the independent international commission of inquiry access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

23. The Movement condemned the continuing Israeli settlement construction throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around occupied East Jerusalem, which was a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and various United Nations resolutions. Those and other systematic violations, including the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians and incessant violence by Israeli settlers and extremists at sensitive religious sites and other locations, had worsened conditions on the ground. The abhorrent Israeli occupation, which remained one of the most destabilizing factors at the regional and global levels, must be ended.

24. The Special Committee's finding that the policies and practices of Israel continued to violate the fundamental human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under

occupation was a matter of serious concern. As a result of the war against Gaza in 2014, almost one third of the entire population of Gaza had been internally displaced. As at August 2015, approximately 100,000 Palestinians remained displaced and were living in precarious conditions in temporary accommodation. The Movement condemned the attacks by Israel against the Palestinian people, including the deadly aggression against the Gaza Strip in 2014, which had exacerbated the existing humanitarian crisis, and called on Israel to promptly and unconditionally end its illegal blockade of Gaza.

25. The Movement condemned the continued detention of a staggering number of Palestinian prisoners, many of whom were children and some of whom were detained without charge, in prisons and detention centres in Israel and the West Bank. As called for in the Declaration on Palestine Political Prisoners, adopted in August 2012 at the Sixteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, and as reiterated at the Seventeenth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, all such prisoners should be immediately released and their plight should be addressed by the international community.

26. Illegal Israeli settlement construction was proceeding apace across the West Bank, facilitated by other illegal measures, including land confiscation. Israeli provocation and incitement had intensified, in particular at holy sites, and settler violence continued to contribute to the displacement of Palestinians. Such activities undermined the contiguity of the West Bank and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and were destroying the two-State solution. The international community, notably the Security Council, must take urgent action to compel Israel to cease its settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and abide by all of its obligations under international law.

27. With reference to the Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirmed that all the unlawful actions committed by Israel constituted a clear violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel should abide by that resolution and withdraw completely to the borders of 4 June 1967.

28. The Movement reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, to the immediate restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in an independent State, and to a just solution for Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

29. Mr. Storaci (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that the European Union remained committed to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution. There was no alternative to that solution, as a one-State reality was not compatible with the legitimate national aspirations of both the Israelis and the Palestinians. In the meantime, the European Union would continue to promote an agreement on substantial steps to improve the situation on the ground, preserve the viability of the two-State solution and build a path back to final status negotiations.

30. The European Union was extremely concerned at the escalation in violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and it condemned any violence against civilians and all acts of terror. All perpetrators of crimes or acts of terror must be brought to justice, and both Israelis and Palestinians had the right to live in peace and security. The response of security forces needed to be proportionate and consistent regardless of the identity of the perpetrators, and Israel must conduct a thorough investigation into cases in which lethal force had been used.

31. Amid recurring clashes at the Haram al-Sharif, or Temple Mount, the European Union renewed its appeal for full respect for holy sites and stressed that any change to the historic status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects. While it welcomed the understandings reached between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, broader action was also needed, including tangible steps to preserve the viability of the two-State solution and lower the risk of violence. Jerusalem was a city sacred to three religions and the European Union had never recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem. Genuine peace could be achieved only through negotiations to resolve the status of

Jerusalem as the future capital of two States, and the Israeli Government must cease all discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

32. Settlements were illegal under international law, constituted an obstacle to peace and threatened to make a two-State solution impossible. The Government of Israel must put an end to all settlement activity, including so-called "natural growth", in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and all outposts erected since March 2001 must be dismantled. The European Union was committed to ensuring full implementation of European Union legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products and to ensuring that all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union explicitly indicated their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

33. The European Union was deeply concerned at the violence and incitement against Palestinians and Israelis, including settler extremism in the West Bank, and condemned settler violence and deliberate provocations against Palestinian civilians. A full and prompt investigation of all crimes committed by Israeli settlers must be conducted and the Israeli authorities should take measures to protect the local population. There should be full accountability, effective law enforcement and zero tolerance for settler violence, and Israel must vigorously address the perceived impunity for such violence by expediting investigations and prosecutions of those responsible.

34. The European Union was deeply concerned at the worsening living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C and at the demolitions, evictions and forced transfers, including of Bedouin communities. In that regard it recalled the applicability of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The European Union had repeatedly expressed its concern at Israeli plans to "relocate" a number of Bedouin and herding communities from their current locations in the central West Bank, including in the strategic E1 area, and it called on the Israeli authorities to halt plans for the forced transfer of populations from the Susya and Abu Nwar communities. The Government of Israel must develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population. Accelerated Palestinian construction and the social and economic development of Area C would

strengthen the prosperity and security of both Israelis and Palestinians.

35. The humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Gaza remained dire and addressing the root causes of that conflict must be an immediate priority for the parties concerned and the international community. The European Union welcomed the steps taken by Israel to ease restrictions in Gaza but considered that further positive measures were needed to enable the full delivery of humanitarian aid, reconstruction and economic recovery on a permanent basis. Crossing points must be fully opened and measures must be taken to address the legitimate security concerns of Israel. Rocket fire by militant groups was unacceptable and underlined the danger of escalation. All stakeholders must make a commitment to non-violence and peace.

36. Palestinian unity was fundamental to achieve a two-State solution and ensure security for all, and Palestinian factions must work towards reconciliation and the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza. The Palestinian Authority must take greater responsibility and assume its government function in the Gaza Strip. Compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by States and non-State actors, including through their acceptance of accountability, was a cornerstone for peace and security in the region.

37. Israel should cooperate fully with all special procedures established by the Human Rights Council, including by issuing a standing invitation to all of them, and should also cooperate fully with OHCHR on the ground. The European Union remained concerned about the extensive recourse by Israel to administrative detention of excessive duration without charge and called on Israel to bring formal charges against individuals detained and ensure fair trials.

38. Furthermore, the European Union remained concerned at the high number of Palestinian children detained by Israel and the continuing reports of their ill treatment. It urged Israel to continue its cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to ensure that all gaps between policy and practice were bridged urgently and that the rights of children in Israeli military custody were upheld at all times. Military courts were no place for children and the detention of children should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time. In addition, children

must at all times be afforded the safeguards to which they were legally entitled. Lastly, the European Union was also concerned at the continuing incursions by Israeli forces into Area A, which jeopardized the internationally recognized success of Palestinian efforts at institution-building. It was especially concerned about night incursions and their possible impact on children and other vulnerable persons, and recalled the recommendation by UNICEF that all arrests of children should be conducted during daylight, notwithstanding exceptional and grave situations.

39. Mr. Adam (Sudan) said that the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had deteriorated so much over the last year that it was on the brink of crisis. Israeli forces had destroyed homes, displaced their inhabitants, arbitrarily arrested defenceless Palestinian civilians, often using excessive force, and subjected them to torture and detention without trial, all of which was in gross violation of international law.

40. The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and other areas had turned the Occupied Palestinian Territories into a vast prison where living conditions were abysmal, unemployment was on the rise and essential supplies such as food, medicine and clothing were scarce. Such dire conditions risked leading to a rise in criminal activity as people struggled for survival.

41. The Sudan condemned Israel's illegal practices against the people of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories and supported the legitimate claim of Palestine to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and ensure the return of Palestine refugees to their homes. His delegation urged the international community to put an end to Israel's persistent violations of international law and implement all international agreements pertaining to the question of Palestine. Those efforts should lead to Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine.

42. Mr. Hamed (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the international community had failed to take any genuine action to end the prolonged occupation by Israel of Arab lands, despite the fact that Israel had openly rejected the two-State solution and had repeatedly committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. While Israel carried out daily attempts to alter the character of Christian and Muslim holy sites and

continued its rapid expansion of Israeli settlements, which were universally recognized — even by its most loyal supporter — to be illegal and constitute an obstacle to peace, the United Nations had turned a blind eye to the situation and failed to impose sanctions of any kind on Israel. The Organization's continued failure to act would undermine its credibility and lead to catastrophic consequences in the region.

43. In the Syrian Golan, the Israeli authorities continued to carry out systematic human rights violations that included racial discrimination and arbitrary arrest, including the re-arrest of a Syrian activist who had already spent years in prison for having exposed Israeli support for terrorists in the area of separation in the Syrian Golan. Israel also refused to provide international organizations with maps of the minefields it had sown and continued its theft of natural resources, including water and oil.

44. His delegation recalled that the decision by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Syrian Golan had been declared null and void and without international legal effect by Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and urged the international community to take immediate action to end to that country's flagrant violations of international law in the occupied Syrian Golan and have it withdraw to the 1967 borders. He expressed support for the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee (A/70/406), in particular regarding the need for the adoption of appropriate measures to prevent, investigate, punish and provide redress for corporate exploitation of resources in the occupied territories and the Committee's call to Member States to refrain from dealing with organizations and bodies involved in settlements or exploitation of natural resources in the occupied territories.

45. Ms. Sughayar (Jordan) said that the continued illegal practices and oppression by Israel against the Palestinian people would only lead to increased retaliation and fortify the Palestinian resistance. Decades of experience had shown that the use of force served to exacerbate conflict, deepen divisions and spread a culture of hatred, as demonstrated on a daily basis by the aggressive, racist practices of Israeli settlers.

46. Systematic violations of international law by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including construction of the separation wall, land confiscation,

house demolitions, forced displacement, exploitation of natural resources and settlement expansion, would continue unless Israel was held accountable for its actions.

47. The international community must work collectively to end the Israeli occupation, which was the underlying cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and provide legal protection to the Palestinian people in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. Her Government called on Israel, which to date had taken no credible steps to build confidence or create a favourable environment for peace talks, to prove its stated commitment to the peace process by ceasing all aggression against the Palestinians and entering into genuine negotiations to achieve peace, security and stability in the interests of both parties to the conflict.

48. Palestinian children were denied the education and leisure opportunities enjoyed by Israeli children and were instead subjected to daily persecution, attacks and provocation by Israeli extremists and authorities, in addition to long delays at checkpoints, which meant that journeys that should take a few minutes often took many hours. While Israelis received military training from a young age, young Palestinians were simply brought up in the knowledge that the Israeli occupation must end.

49. In Jerusalem, at the holy site of the Haram al-Sharif, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Palestinians faced long-standing restrictions on their freedom of worship, violent attacks by settlers who acted with police protection, and persistent attempts by Israel to change the historic status of the site. Jordan had a legal and historical right to protect the historic character of the Haram al-Sharif and would continue to do so using all diplomatic, political and legal means at its disposal. Her Government strongly condemned the flagrant violations by Israel of Palestinians' freedom of worship, which stoked tensions in Jerusalem and undermined efforts to reach a two-State solution.

50. Jordan remained a staunch supporter of the legitimate and inalienable rights of Palestinians and would continue to cooperate with all international efforts to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel. She stressed the need to resume genuine, meaningful negotiations, with an agreed time frame in order to reach a two-State solution based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State

within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international agreements and the Arab Peace Initiative.

51. Mr. Çevik (Turkey), reiterating his Government's long-standing commitment to peace, stability, security and democracy in the region, with respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, said that the illegal practices of Israel and its unjust occupation of Palestinian territories fuelled hatred and radicalism, thus undermining all efforts to achieve lasting peace in both the region and the globe.

52. His delegation condemned the violations committed with impunity against the human rights of Palestinians, who were subjected to systematic humiliation, discriminatory legislation, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, detention of minors, military raids, forced displacement and house demolitions, among other crimes. Turkey further condemned collective punishment measures and acts of provocation, including the desecration of holy sites such as the Haram al-Sharif. The perpetrators of all such illegal practices must be brought to justice.

53. He expressed concern over the devastating consequences of the illegal blockade and recurrent military attacks on the Gaza Strip, where restrictions on the movement of persons and goods were severely hampering reconstruction efforts, and warned that if the current trend persisted, Gaza could become uninhabitable within five years. Turkey called for the immediate lifting of the blockade and all other restrictions on Gaza, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

54. More than merely condemning Israel for its illegal practices and occupation, the international community must renew its efforts to reach a negotiated political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-State solution and in accordance with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, including the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

55. Mr. Forés Rodríguez (Cuba) said that the lack of cooperation by Israel impeded the Special Committee's work, which must continue until the complete termination of the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The aggressive, colonialist policies and practices of Israel, including settlement construction and expansion, transfer of settlers onto occupied land, construction of the separation wall, destruction and confiscation of Palestinian land and property and forced displacement of Palestinians, were in deliberate contravention of United Nations resolutions and international law and constituted a direct threat to regional and international peace and security.

56. The Israeli blockade, three major wars and severe overcrowding had resulted in appalling living conditions in the Gaza Strip, where a quarter of the population lived in poverty, unemployment stood at over 40 per cent and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were in need of treatment for psychological health problems. At the current rate, with a predicted population of 2.1 million, Gaza was set to become uninhabitable by 2020. Urgent support from the international community was needed to address the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, where reports of the death or detention of innocent Palestinians were now an almost daily occurrence.

57. Cuba reaffirmed its unwavering support for the Palestinian people and called for an end to the prolonged and unlawful Israeli occupation of Palestine, the immediate and unconditional lifting of the cruel and illegal Gaza blockade and the opening of border crossings and checkpoints. Greater efforts were needed to resolve the dire situation of Palestine refugees, in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. The only way to implement a meaningful political process and bring about lasting peace was to end the colonization policy, free Palestinian prisoners and recognize the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

58. Mr. Alnaqshabandi (Iraq) deplored the continued refusal by Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, noting that this lack of cooperation was motivated by that country's indignation at the Committee's previous reports on illegal practices such as pillaging of Palestinian resources, destruction of Palestinian cultural and archaeological heritage, desecration of Islamic and Christian holy sites and violation of freedom of worship. He expressed concern over the illegal practices of Israel, which included settlement

expansion, demolition of Palestinian homes, denial of construction permits to Palestinians, the ongoing blockade against Gaza, attempts to alter the legal status and demographic composition of the Palestinian territories, the arrest of children and the ill-treatment and continued detention of Palestinians, all of which was in flagrant violation of human rights law and international law and contributed to destabilization in the region.

59. His delegation urged the international community to implement all recommendations issued by the Special Committee, in addition to other relevant international agreements, and to take appropriate measures to protect Palestinian civilians and holy sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Haram al-Sharif. The Security Council must take immediate action to protect Palestinians from settler violence and compel the Israeli occupying forces to abide by international law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

60. His delegation condemned the occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel since 1967 and imposition of its laws in the territory since 1981, in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which had declared the annexation of the Syrian Golan by Israel to be null and void.

61. Iraq was a staunch supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people and their claim to establish an independent State in the Palestinian territories with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

62. Mr. Wehbi (Lebanon) said that while the international community celebrated landmark events such as the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the raising of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations, Israel continued its aggressive practices against the State of Palestine, clearly demonstrating that it was not part of the international consensus in favour of peace and development.

63. Every step taken by the State of Palestine to strengthen its involvement in international affairs was met with arbitrary retaliation by Israel; for example, when the State of Palestine had dared to join the International Criminal Court, Israel had withheld tax revenue that it owed to the Palestinian authorities, thus exacerbating the country's financial crisis.

64. In addition to maintaining its occupation of the State of Palestine, Israel continued to forcibly displace Palestinians and demolish their homes. According to recent reports published by various international organizations, settlement expansion in East Jerusalem had reached alarming rates in 2014; large numbers of Palestinians, including women and children, had been killed and injured by the Israeli security forces; and unless the blockade on the Gaza Strip was lifted, the area would become uninhabitable by 2020. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where arbitrary arrests and settler violence were on the rise, was reminiscent of the apartheid era. His delegation condemned attempts to monopolize holy sites in Jerusalem for a single religion and stressed the need to maintain the city's identity as a centre of worship for all faiths.

65. While the State of Palestine was endeavouring to cooperate with the United Nations, Israel was undermining prospects for a two-State solution by continuing its illegal practices. Lebanon called on the international community to work together to revitalize peace talks with a view to ending the occupation as soon as possible, in accordance with the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

66. Mr. Rim Chol Ung (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation deeply regretted the continuing human rights violations committed by Israel against the Palestinians and other Arab people. Israel had slaughtered thousands of Palestinians and had ruined their territory in a large-scale military attack in 2014 and was becoming more transparent in its efforts to crush Palestinian will for an independent State by expanding Jewish settlements. With a view to occupying Palestine permanently, Israel had increased the construction of houses in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by 40 per cent in 2014 compared with 2013 and had developed large-scale plans to build more housing and public buildings in 2015.

67. As Israel manoeuvred to expand its settlement area in the Middle East it had created some five million Palestinian refugees, while many others were living in precarious conditions and facing serious water shortages. Despite its mission to ensure international peace and security, the Security Council had taken no measures to address the crimes against humanity being committed by Israel. That was because the Security

Council was fully supported by the United States of America, which in 2014 had exercised its veto to force the rejection of a draft resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Occupied Palestinian Territory by 2017, the conclusion of a peace treaty and the recognition of the Palestinian State. As a result, the peace process between Palestine and Israel had reached a deadlock despite the willingness of the Arab people to achieve peace in the Middle East.

68. The United States and Israel were acting contrary to the desire of the international community to settle the Middle East issue and the Palestinian issue in compliance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Those two countries should immediately grant both moral and material compensation to the Palestinians and other Arabs and should tackle the peace process in an honest manner. His delegation supported the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital and sought a peaceful, impartial settlement of the Middle East issue for all Arab people.

69. Mr. Al-Hamadi (Qatar) expressed concern about the deteriorating security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a result of Israeli human rights abuses, which included home demolitions, forced displacement, excessive violence committed with impunity against Palestinians by Israeli citizens and security forces, the continued construction of the illegal separation wall and its isolation of Palestinian communities and the unlawful detention of Palestinians, including children. The strategy adopted by Israel of suffocating the Palestinian economy and threatening the livelihoods of Palestinian communities by cutting off their water supply was equally distressing.

70. The situation in the Gaza Strip continued to deteriorate as a result of the devastation left by the 2014 military assault and the ongoing blockade, which was severely hampering reconstruction efforts and preventing access to basic supplies.

71. The desecration by Israel of Christian and Muslim holy sites, in particular the Haram Al-Sharif, undermined prospects for a full and lasting peace in the Middle East. Qatar strongly condemned the provocative statements by Israel; policies and practices aimed at altering the demographic composition and

Arab identity of Jerusalem; attempts at spatial and temporal division of the Haram al-Sharif; attacks on Palestinian worshippers; and restrictions on their freedom of worship.

72. The illegal annexation of the Syrian Golan and exploitation of the territory's natural resources by Israel were also in blatant violation of international law and Security Council resolutions.

73. Given that such illegal practices would not cease until the root problem was tackled, his delegation called for immediate action to end the Israeli occupation and uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return. This would only be achieved through a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement based on the two-State solution and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

74. Qatar stood in solidarity with its Palestinian and Arab brothers in their just struggle to end Israeli occupation of their land and realize their inalienable rights. It called on the international community to provide international protection to the Palestinian people and put an end to the crimes of the Israeli occupying Power, in line with the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 904 (1994) and 605 (1987).

75. Mr. Ben Sliman (Tunisia) said that the Palestinians could not feel even a glimmer of hope about their political and economic future, or their security, while Israel continued to derail the peace process and pursue its colonialist expansion with impunity by establishing roadblocks, demolishing Palestinian homes and imposing an unprecedented blockade of Gaza. Tunisia condemned such practices by Israel, which included depriving Palestinians of their natural resources, expelling them from their lands and restricting their freedom of movement. In addition, the increasing numbers of detentions, the construction of settlements and the annexation of Palestinian territory constituted a major obstacle to peace and violated United Nations resolutions and international law.

76. Attacks and provocation against holy sites clearly reflected the objectives underlying Israeli policies and

his delegation called for an end to Israeli attempts to Judaize Jerusalem or to alter the status of the city. Attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque would only fuel tensions, and the international community must assume its responsibilities to put an end to such violence.

77. There was clearly a link between the recent surge in violence and the decades of occupation, violations of international humanitarian law and oppression of the Palestinian people. It was high time that the Security Council and the international community assumed their responsibility to protect the Palestinian population against the machinations of the occupying Power, and steps to that end must be taken before the situation deteriorated any further. The peace process must be relaunched with a view to achieving a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East on the basis of a two-State solution, but that could be achieved only through an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

78. Mr. Sharoni (Israel) said that the Government of Israel was ready to work with all those who were committed to enhancing the security, coexistence and welfare of all peoples in the region. Israel sought a lasting peace that would end the conflict once and for all and supported the vision of two States for two peoples.

79. It was therefore unfortunate that the report of the Special Committee was a one-sided distortion of the truth that ignored the reality on the ground and did nothing to promote lasting peace. Instead it merely advanced a political agenda that was designed to discredit Israel. The report failed to include the steps that Israel had taken and would continue to take to improve the well-being of the people living in the Gaza Strip under the oppressive rule of Hamas. Despite the constant threat posed to the citizens of Israel from rocket attacks launched from Gaza by Hamas, Israel had been working closely with the United Nations to facilitate reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Over 347 projects had already been approved by the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism and 141 international projects had been established outside that framework. Israel had upgraded the capacities of the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings, and almost two million tons of building materials for the Mechanism had been transferred into Gaza.

80. To improve the well-being of the people of Gaza, Israel had granted entry permits to allow for urgent

medical care and had increased the number of travel permits to the West Bank for non-urgent medical care. It had also coordinated the movement of 650 doctors and medical teams from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank for continuing education projects and conferences. All those steps would have had a significant impact on the lives of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. However, to produce better results through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, the Palestinian Authority must take on a more substantive role. The fact that the Palestinian Authority did not assert its responsibility for the Gaza Strip raised doubts about its priorities. There must be zero tolerance for terror and violence, and the rehabilitation of Gaza must go hand in hand with the demilitarization of Hamas and the return of the Palestinian Authority to effective governance in Gaza.

81. In recent weeks Israeli citizens had been facing daily terror attacks by Palestinians and the reasons for that wave of terror were clear, as inflammatory rhetoric and lies about the Temple Mount had incited violence. The President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, had continually accused Israel of trying to change the status quo, but in reality Israel remained committed to the status quo. Far from endangering holy sites, it was Israel that ensured their security as it continued to protect the right of Muslims to pray in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the freedom of people of all faiths to visit the Temple Mount. Each year, the Temple Mount was visited by some 3.5 million Muslims compared with only 12,000 Jews. The facts spoke for themselves and it was important that those basic truths were reaffirmed by the international community in order to defuse the situation.

82. Israel had repeatedly called for the resumption of talks and had expressed its readiness to meet with Arab and Palestinian leaders in order to advance the peace process, but the Palestinian side consistently refused to return to the negotiating table. The Palestinian Authority must play a constructive role in the process by demonstrating its commitment to bilateral negotiations instead of unilateral actions. Concrete solutions could be found only through direct negotiations, and any other path would hold the region captive to the chains of resentment and hatred, and would pass on a legacy of violence and intolerance to the next generation. Israel called on its Palestinian and Arab neighbours to join it in taking concrete and courageous steps to pursue the path of peace. The cycle

of inflammatory rhetoric must end and the Fourth Committee's resources must instead be used to improve the lives of the people in the region.

83. Mr. Atlassi (Morocco) said that the report of the Special Committee had shown that Israel was persisting in its Judaization of Jerusalem and expropriation of Palestinians in violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. During consultations, Member States had expressed concern about the Israeli Government's lack of cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and other relevant committees, as well as about continued settler violence, the condition of detainees, excessive use of force, the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Bedouins and herders, and excavations under and obstruction of access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem was inextricably linked to restrictions on Palestinians. Israel continued to disregard international instruments and resolutions, including Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions.

84. As Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, Morocco was particularly concerned about Israeli efforts to change the legal status of Jerusalem, which was recognized by international resolutions as an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The temporal and spatial division of Jerusalem by Israel, and its violations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and expansion of settlements in the city of Jerusalem were moving the issue into the realm of religious conflict. The creeping Judaization of Jerusalem exacerbated the grievance felt by the Palestinians and millions of Muslims around the world, and flew in the face of efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. A recent meeting on international action on Jerusalem held by the Ministerial Contact Group of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and chaired by Morocco had issued a statement calling on the Security Council to undertake its responsibility to stop Israel from taking actions that violated the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. The path to peace lay in a return to the negotiating table within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative, with a view to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.



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Chair: Mr. Bowler (Malawi)

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Agenda item 55: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*)

Agenda item 57: Comprehensive review of special political missions (*continued*)

Agenda item 63: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*)

Agenda item 56: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

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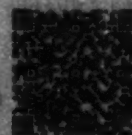
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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 55: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (continued) (A/70/133, A/70/312, A/70/341, A/70/351, A/70/406, A/70/406/Corr.1 and A/70/421)

1. Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that the Group was deeply concerned at the recent sharp rise in acts of violence, terror and provocation perpetrated by Israeli settlers and security forces against Palestinians, in particular since October 2015, and the continued violations by Israel of international human rights law and humanitarian law. He recalled that, in November 2015, Arab League ministers had issued a decision denouncing ongoing Israeli settler terrorism, State terrorism, colonization, Judaization and ethnic cleansing as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

2. According to the reports submitted to the Committee, there had been no abatement in Israeli aggression; the occupying Power continued to use excessive and lethal force against Palestinians and to hold thousands of Palestinians, including women and children, in prison. Prisoners, including children and pregnant women, were subjected to mental and physical torture and killed in cold blood; after death, their bodies were desecrated. The Arab Group called on the international community to condemn such crimes unequivocally, hold the Israeli authorities fully accountable and bring all perpetrators to international justice without delay.

3. Israeli settlers and State forces continued to desecrate Islamic holy sites, threaten the security of Muslim and Christian places of worship, attempt to Judaize Jerusalem and strip its holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Haram Al-Sharif, of their historical Arab identity. Immediate and decisive measures must be taken to oblige Israel to cease those illegal practices.

4. The Israeli forces showed blatant contempt for international consensus and jeopardized the two-State solution by continuing to evict and forcibly displace Palestinians, demolish their homes, confiscate their property, expand settlements, extend the separation wall, exploit resources in the occupied Syrian Golan and illegally trade goods produced in Israeli

settlements, in contravention of the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and related United Nations resolutions. The Group expressed its appreciation to Governments that had banned their citizens from doing business with Israeli settlers and called on other States to follow suit. The decision of the European Union to introduce specific labelling for goods that originated from occupied territories also represented a positive step towards ensuring legal and moral accountability in that regard.

5. The unjust Israeli blockade of Gaza was resulting in acute poverty, economic collapse and severe unemployment, particularly among Gazan youth, and had robbed Palestinians of the basic means to live in dignity. Restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank had damaging economic and social consequences. Thousands of Gazan families remained homeless because Israel continued to thwart reconstruction efforts in the wake of its devastating attacks on the Gaza Strip in 2014, which had caused extensive loss of life and destroyed thousands of buildings, including United Nations facilities. Since Israel was all too clearly failing to meet its responsibility to protect Palestinians, the Arab Group called for urgent action to establish a system of international protection in the occupied State of Palestine, including Jerusalem, pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

6. The Arab Group reaffirmed its full support for the Palestinian people in their ongoing resistance and courageous defence of their land and holy sites in the face of hostile Israeli practices. It called on Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with international law and all political, economic and security-related agreements to which it was a signatory. Israel must also cooperate with efforts to set a deadline for ending its occupation of the Palestinian territories and other occupied territories in Lebanon and the Syrian Golan, withdraw to the pre-1967 borders, achieve a just and comprehensive peaceful settlement in accordance with the relevant legal decisions and the Arab Peace Initiative, and enable the Palestinian people to establish their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

7. Ms. Al Musharakh (United Arab Emirates) said that the findings of the Special Committee were

incomplete because Israel continued to refuse to cooperate with it or allow its members entry into the Palestinian territories. Given that the extent of illegal Israeli practices went far beyond what had been documented to date, her delegation called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to allow the members of the Special Committee to enter the occupied territories so that they could report in full on Israel's violations of international law, including its failure to meet its obligations as an occupying Power.

8. Her delegation was deeply concerned about the increase in illegal Israeli practices and the rising tensions resulting from Israel's gross violations of international law. As highlighted in the report of the Special Committee (A/70/406 and A/70/406/Corr.1), increasing numbers of Palestinians were being held in Israeli detention centres, where they suffered medical neglect, ill-treatment, beatings and torture. Hundreds of children had been subjected to arbitrary detention, with some given prison sentences of up to 20 years. Israel continued to expand its settlements, demolish Palestinians' homes, confiscate their land and forcibly displace large numbers of families, including many Bedouins, in the West Bank and in particular in East Jerusalem, where Palestinians were subjected to restrictions on their freedom and, based on a multitude of discriminatory laws, treated as "permanent residents", whose status could be revoked at any time. Israel continued to obstruct deliberately the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Palestinians and to allow settlers to commit acts of violence against them with impunity, while the victims of such aggression suffered serious humanitarian, financial, psychological and economic consequences. The Israeli forces exercised repression and excessive force against unarmed Palestinians and intentionally delayed or obstructed their access to medical treatment. Israel had not only maintained its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip but had also carried out repeated attacks on the area, notably the most recent military onslaught in 2014, during which over two thirds of the casualties were civilians. Such collective punishment had had a devastating psychological, physical and economic impact on the population and had led to high rates of unemployment and shortages of fuel, electricity and sanitation. Furthermore, Israeli companies and the State continued to exploit Palestinian natural resources.

9. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was becoming increasingly strained as a

result of persistent Israeli acts of provocation, intimidation and racial incitement, including the desecration of holy sites, and the lethal and violent attacks perpetrated against innocent Palestinians, including children, by the occupying forces and extremist Israeli settlers. Such practices were the product of the culture of hatred and impunity fostered by the Israeli Government among its citizens.

10. The United Arab Emirates strongly condemned Israel's persistent violations of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant international agreements, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the principle of land for peace. The Israeli Government must immediately cease its violations and assume full responsibility for its actions. Her delegation also called on the United Nations to provide international protection to the Palestinian people and take all necessary measures to put an end to all provocation and illegal practices by Israel, in particular its settlement expansion activity and attempts to divide the Haram Al-Sharif spatially and temporally, all of which had repeatedly thwarted the peace negotiations.

11. The Palestinian cause remained the highest priority for all Arabs; the lack of a just solution was the main catalyst of extremism and terrorism in the region. Her delegation called on the international community, including the Security Council, the Quartet and their regional partners, to do their utmost to bring peace and security to the region by ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and implementing the two-State solution based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid principles. The Secretariat should continue to support the Special Committee in its important work of reporting on the illegal practices of Israel, in accordance with its mandate.

12. Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan) said that, while Israel persistently refused to cooperate with the Special Committee or allow access to international organizations in order for them to verify the situation on the ground, innocent Palestinian civilians continued to suffer brutal repression, restrictions on their rights and freedom, harassment by Israeli settlers, terror and provocation at holy sites, including the

Al-Aqsa mosque compound, and bleak prospects for a negotiated and comprehensive peace settlement. Violent incidents were on the rise and a third and more intense intifada was being predicted. The suffering of the Palestinians was further exacerbated by the eight-year blockade of Gaza, which was severely hampering reconstruction efforts in the wake of the devastation caused by the 2014 conflict in Gaza. Collective punishment, though clearly futile, continued to be inflicted.

13. The Israeli military's heavy-handed practices and use of live ammunition, which had resulted in high numbers of casualties among innocent civilians, were a matter of concern. Limitations on the use of force under international law applied in cases where a military occupying Power operated in civilian areas. Also of concern was the discriminatory Israeli legislation which imposed disproportionate penalties on Palestinian minors, including four-year prison sentences for stone-throwing, while the arrest of youth activists and their family members on charges of incitement on Facebook further fostered a climate of fear and despondency. Such mental and physical torture of Palestinian youth would only engender more violence.

14. Pakistan welcomed the Secretary-General's recent visit to the region and supported his view that the only way to end the violence was to make genuine progress towards a just and lasting political solution, which must include an end to the occupation and the establishment of an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in addition to the withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces from all Arab lands, including Lebanon and the Syrian Golan. Noting that the prospects for any such solution remained bleak, she asked what could be done to achieve the necessary progress and wondered whether the Security Council would remain mute on the issue.

15. She reiterated her Government's unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their long struggle for self-determination. Bearing in mind that the 2014 conflict in Gaza had greatly increased the responsibilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Agency's financial needs must be urgently met and the pledges made following that conflict should be fulfilled without delay.

16. Mr. Mminele (South Africa) said that the Committee's debate was taking place against a backdrop of escalating tensions and violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially East Jerusalem; as a result of the hostilities, 73 Palestinians had been killed and at least 2,360 injured, while attacks on Jewish Israelis had also resulted in the death of 11 Israelis. His delegation condemned all violence, regardless of the perpetrators. It conveyed its condolences to the families and friends of victims on all sides of the conflict and called upon the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to exercise restraint when responding to the recent incidents. South Africa denounced all attempts to change the historical status quo in the Holy Land, which had preserved mutual respect for the holy sites of the world's three major monotheistic religions. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was an urgent reminder of the need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the roots of which were the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land in 1967.

17. His delegation was gravely concerned at the Special Committee's findings regarding the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including women and children. It called on Israel to respect the human rights of all Palestinian prisoners and abide by the relevant provisions of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. South Africa condemned the ongoing settlement activities of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which showed blatant disregard for international opinion, undermined the two-State solution and threatened the viability and territorial contiguity of the future Palestinian State. It also condemned the violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property, including home demolitions, and urged the Israeli authorities to take action against the perpetrators of such actions. It stressed the urgent need for Israel to lift its illegal blockade, which was exacerbating the already dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

18. The only way to achieve lasting peace between Israel and Palestine was to hold comprehensive and unconditional negotiations to address all final status issues, including with regard to Israeli settlement activity, the lifting of the blockade on Gaza and the continuing occupation of Palestinian territory. Such negotiations would also greatly contribute to peace and security throughout the Middle East. His Government

supported international efforts aimed at the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as part of a two-State solution that would allow the States of Israel and Palestine to coexist side by side in peace, on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967.

19. Mr. AlJarallah (Kuwait) commended the Special Committee for the diligent work it had undertaken despite the restrictions imposed upon it by Israel, which refused to cooperate with its investigations. The report of the Special Committee clearly showed that Israel was continuing its systematic settlement expansion in defiance of international law and duly adopted resolutions. The sharp rise in settlement construction since the previous year was the clearest proof of Israel's obstinacy and insistence on flouting international law. Such actions also undermined Israel's credibility in efforts to reach a lasting political settlement that included the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the pre-1967 borders.

20. Israel's savage attack on Gaza in July 2014 had wreaked unprecedented devastation. Its imposition of the logic of force, regardless of the repercussions, stood in sharp contrast with the international community's calls for it to abide by the principles of international law. Kuwait reaffirmed its full support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to secure its legitimate political rights, end the Israeli occupation of its land within a specific time frame and establish an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. It also demanded the release of Palestinian prisoners and the dispatch of an international fact-finding mission to investigate the conditions in Israeli occupation prisons and verify the extent of Israel's compliance with international law in that regard. Kuwait rejected Israel's illegal and inhuman blockade of the Gaza Strip.

21. His delegation reiterated its support for Palestine's request for full membership in the United Nations. The international community should assume responsibility for compelling Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee and implement its recommendations, thereby ending its flagrant violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied territories.

22. Mr. Jiménez (Nicaragua) called upon Israel to allow members of the Special Committee to enter its

territory to hold consultations with the Israeli Government and Palestinian victims in the occupied territories. For over 67 years, Palestinians had struggled to survive under an illegal and inhumane economic blockade, which severely restricted their ability to meet their own basic needs, including health care, education and decent housing. In the light of the newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he wondered how the Palestinians would ever be able to realize their right to development or achieve the Sustainable Development Goals while Israel continued its illegal occupation of their territory. In the Gaza Strip in particular, all aspects of the economy were controlled by Israel, which exploited natural resources, restricted Palestinians' freedom of movement and destroyed their infrastructure and crops on a daily basis. Gazans could not focus fully on their social and economic development when their primary concern was simply to survive; meanwhile, the international community stood by and did nothing to relieve their suffering.

23. It was regrettable that, despite increasing numbers of deaths among innocent Palestinians, in addition to mass displacement and the continued destruction of Palestinian homes and infrastructure, the Palestinian question remained unresolved. Nicaragua called upon the international community, including the Security Council, to prevent further escalation of the already tense situation in East Jerusalem, including in the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, ensure respect for religious freedom and prevent religious incitement to violence and extremism.

24. Nicaragua stood in solidarity with Palestinian political prisoners, especially women and children, who were held in Israeli jails and subjected to inhumane treatment by the Israeli authorities, which had provoked hunger strikes and in some cases led to the death of prisoners. His Government therefore called for the immediate release of all Palestinian prisoners imprisoned by the Israeli authorities.

25. The first step towards achieving peace and sustainable economic development in Palestine would be to implement the relevant resolutions calling for Palestinian sovereignty and self-determination and allow Palestinian refugees to return to their historic homeland. His Government reiterated its support for the Palestinian State in its struggle for freedom and the realization of its inalienable rights and stressed that occupied peoples, like all others, had a right to

development. Issues relating to the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, illegal Israeli settlements, borders, security, prisoners and water must be resolved before a just and sustainable peace could be achieved. Nicaragua supported the establishment of a Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, thus allowing both States to co-exist peacefully side by side, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the wishes of peace-loving peoples. The raising of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations during the current session of the General Assembly demonstrated the increased international support for the Palestinian cause. Any peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict must involve all countries in the region and address not only the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also the situation in the Lebanese occupied territories and the occupied Syrian Golan.

26. Mr. Djacta (Algeria) said that Israel was severely hampering the work of the Special Committee by persistently refusing to cooperate with its mandate to investigate systematic human rights abuses by the Israeli Government against the people of Palestine. In addition to its principal crime of denying Palestinians their right to self-determination, Israel also subjected them to a myriad of economic and social hardships, desecrated their places of worship and perpetrated aggression against them, including a recent attack in which children had been burnt to death. Advances in technology meant that people all over the world could now receive broadcasts that showed the Israeli authorities arming fanatics and condoning their attacks on Palestinians peacefully demanding an end to the occupation. Furthermore, the illegal and colonialist blockade of Gaza had effectively turned the territory into a vast prison. Algeria urged the international community to use the means at its disposal to resolve the Palestinian question by ending the occupation and ensuring the establishment of a fully-fledged Palestinian State.

27. Mr. Halima (Egypt) said that his delegation was deeply concerned about ongoing Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories, and in particular the record numbers of tenders issued over the last two years for the construction of residential units in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Such activity, compounded by the violent actions of Israeli settlers against Palestinians, was rapidly shattering any possibility of reaching a two-State solution.

28. While his Government remained committed to achieving peace and condemned all violence against civilians, it emphasized that recent Israeli practices, including attacks on worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, constituted unprecedented provocation not only against Palestinians but against Muslims worldwide. In addition to their potentially devastating impact on the peace process, such actions could strengthen the hand of extremist and terrorist groups by serving as additional material for their deceptive recruitment practices among Muslim youth.

29. The crisis in Syria was not a reason for the international community to forget about the occupied Syrian Golan. His delegation strongly condemned Israel's continued occupation of that territory and urged Israel to withdraw immediately to the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

30. Mr. Proaño (Ecuador) said that the reports of the Secretary-General before the Committee, which drew attention to repeated violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967, also highlighted once again the disappointing double standards with which the United Nations addressed many crucial issues of the day. It was a matter of grave concern that while the reports dealt with a number of recurring issues, there were no signs of any improvement of the situation in the State of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, and the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the question had been blatantly ignored. The litany of deliberate violations of international law — including, inter alia, the excessive use of force against civilians, the blockade of Gaza, Israeli settlements and the inhumane treatment of Palestinian and Arab prisoners — had become routine in the occupied territories and, despite its efforts, the United Nations lacked the capacity to prevent them. The latest outbreaks of violence in Palestine and Israel clearly highlighted the inability of the Organization, in particular the Security Council, to address the root causes of the question of Palestine.

31. It was clear that disregard for the law, the often disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force and the military might of the occupying Power had in no way helped to make countries of the region more secure and stable, created a conducive environment for nation-building or generated any legitimacy but had merely succeeded in sowing resentment, distrust and

frustration and in creating a vicious cycle of chaos, violence and death. Legitimacy would be established not only by the ratification of treaties and conventions but through tangible demonstrations of compliance with those treaties, with moral and ethical codes of conduct, and with the law. The international community should also ask whether the option of preferring force over the rule of law was sustainable over the long term from a legal, political, economic, social and ethical perspective.

32. Negation of the other merely sparked retaliatory mentalities, a situation from which no one stood to gain. For there to be peace in Israel and Palestine, it was necessary to address comprehensively and decisively the underlying obstacles by ensuring an end to the military occupation and the full exercise of Palestinian sovereignty over its territory, demarcated on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, and with the right of return for expelled Palestinians. The international community and the United Nations must urge both parties to resume negotiations without preconditions as soon as possible with a view to reaching fair agreements on the key issues that had hindered the achievement of a comprehensive peace based on the vision of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within safe and recognized borders.

33. Mr. Sareer (Maldives) said that the report of the Special Committee added to an ever-growing corpus of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, International Court of Justice rulings and numerous reports from United Nations bodies and other international organizations representing the overwhelming global will for an immediate and unequivocal halt to the harmful Israeli practices that denied the populations of the occupied territories their inalienable rights. Israel's national policies consistently and blatantly violated international law and constituted a system of apartheid. The blockade of Gaza was the collective punishment of an already downtrodden population: with over two thousand Palestinians killed since 2014, over 25,000 housing units destroyed, and half a million Palestinians displaced during recent hostilities, there was no justification for the further deprivation of aid and assistance to that population. The creation of a destitute population dependent on foreign aid was the direct result of military occupation, by means of which Israel — which was directly

responsible for systematic violations of fundamental rights — perpetuated a cycle of hatred, fear and violence. Occupation was not and had never been the solution, but was rather a self-sustaining force that destroyed communities' ability to do anything more than simply survive.

34. He expressed his delegation's solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterated its unwavering support for the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to a sovereign and independent State. The Maldives supported a two-State solution, with Palestine and Israel co-existing side by side, based on the pre-1967 borders, and with Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, and called for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories. The Maldives once again joined other delegations in calling upon Israel to stop disregarding the overwhelming weight of international law and global will and to bring an end to decades of injustice, violence, and hatred.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

35. Ma. Maltzad (Israel) said that every year the Committee held the current aboard meeting in which her delegation witnessed a march of folly as the worst human rights abusers voiced not only their hypocrisy but often their superficial knowledge of the subject. The Special Committee's findings were effectively decided before it even started its work and a simple Internet search of some of the alleged facts would reveal how distorted the report was compared to reality. The result was yet another misleading and destructive United Nations report that presented half-truths and twisted facts taken out of context. She wished to set the record straight with regard to the baseless accusations and lies that had been repeatedly proffered during the consideration of the current agenda item.

36. While welcoming the marked interest in Palestinian rights shown by the representative of Lebanon, she suggested that, before speaking about Israel, he might wish to take a look at the refugee camps in his own country, where Palestinians endured some of the worst conditions in the region in terms of violence, extreme discrimination and economic and social oppression. As for his accusations regarding Israeli Government policies, it should be recalled that Hezbollah, an internationally designated terrorist

group, was part of the Lebanese Government, comprising half its cabinet.

37. The long statement by the Palestinian representative had failed to answer why the Palestinian Authority was refusing to resume direct negotiations with Israel, which remained committed to the two-State solution and had repeatedly invited the Palestinian President to resume peace talks. However, the Palestinian Authority continued to evade the question while making outrageous allegations, even accusing Israel, in an official letter to the Security Council, of organ harvesting — an obscene reflection of the blood libels of the nineteenth century. By inciting further violence and by refusing to return to Gaza and to resume direct negotiations, the Palestinian Authority was avoiding taking responsibility over the current wave of terror and over its own people and their future.

38. It never ceased to amaze her that a brutal regime that lacked all international credibility believed it had any right to lecture others. The ongoing attempts by the Syrian representative to divert the conversation and to blame everyone else for the devastating humanitarian situation in his country were tiring; none must forget that he spoke on behalf of a regime that systematically used chemical substances to murder its own citizens. With regard to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Cuba, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, she hoped that the citizens of those countries enjoyed the same rights of freedom of speech or assembly as did their representatives at the United Nations. Those who truly sought to play a positive and constructive role in the conflict must focus their efforts on supporting the resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians as opposed to making empty statements in the Fourth Committee.

39. Mr. Hamed (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the delegation of Israel, having listened to a torrent of international condemnation of the Israeli Government throughout the debate on the current and the previous agenda item, had regrettably resorted to its usual defamatory accusations against Member States and to its claims that the Fourth Committee was politicized, in a futile bid to divert attention away from the Israeli Government's heinous crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

40. It was outrageous for the representative of Israel to comment on the peace process and human rights

when her Government appeared to be a contender for a world record in terms of the extent, magnitude and sheer brutality of its human rights violations in the occupied Arab territories. Israel also continued to prevent human rights organizations, peace activists and representatives of the United Nations, including members of the Special Committee, from entering the occupied territories to carry out their work. He wondered if the representative of Israel considered every statement delivered before the Fourth Committee on the topic at hand as "politicized", even those made by States that were friends of Israel.

41. He urged the Israeli delegation to open its eyes for once and see the reality of the systematic abuses carried out by its Government on a daily basis; Israel's violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which included daily killings of innocent Palestinians, home demolitions, and policies of racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing aimed against Arabs living under the occupation, had been extensively documented by the United Nations. In view of those facts, he could only conclude that the representative of Israel had either failed to understand her Government's crimes or was deliberately refusing to do so; that came as no surprise given the relentless onslaught of terror and oppression perpetrated against the peoples of the region by the Israeli State ever since its establishment.

42. Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation stood by its statement before the Committee and the letters it had addressed to the various organs of the United Nations. Those statements of fact reflected — without distortion, rhetoric or propaganda — the real suffering, trauma and terror endured every day by the Palestinian people under decades of foreign military occupation. The representative of Israel continued to ignore that occupation and refused to address it by any means, whether in the context of international law, the United Nations, including the Fourth Committee, and reports of credible United Nations agencies, or in negotiations for a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution.

43. Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, rather than mouthing insincere expressions of sorrow about the human rights situation in certain countries, including his own, the representative of Israel, a regime that was guilty of killing children, should instead explain why her Government had attacked

Gaza in 2014, killing over 2,200 and injuring more than 10,000 Palestinians, demolishing 25,000 homes, and forcing the displacement of more than half a million Palestinians. It should be recalled in that regard that 100,000 Palestinians were still displaced because of the significant delays in reconstruction efforts, all because of continued Israeli aggression. The facts in his statement delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had been quoted from the report of the Special Committee and the representative of Israel should be called upon to answer the many questions raised during the debate.

Agenda item 57: Comprehensive review of special political missions (continued) (A/C.4/70/L.14)

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.14: Comprehensive review of special political missions

44. Mr. Alday González (Mexico), introducing the draft resolution, said that Austria, the Central African Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Montenegro, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, Spain, Turkey and Uruguay had joined the sponsors. Mexico, convinced that transparency and accountability could only strengthen Member States' understanding of and participation in international peace and security, would continue to insist in the Fourth and Fifth Committees that clearer and more detailed information should be made available to all Member States on the criteria and rules for the establishment and definition of the mandates of special political missions. It was important to promote the holding of, and participation in, regular interactive dialogue on overall policy matters pertaining to such missions.

45. The Chair said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

46. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.14 was adopted.*

Agenda item 63: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/C.4/70/L.5)

Draft decision A/C.4/70/L.5: Question of Gibraltar

47. The Chair said that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

48. *Draft decision A/C.4/70/L.3 was adopted.*

Agenda item 56: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (continued) (A/70/95-S/2015/446 and A/70/357-S/2015/682)

49. Mr. Kim Taedong (Republic of Korea) said that over the last year significant progress had been made in efforts to improve and enhance peacekeeping capabilities and activities: military leaders attending the first United Nations Chiefs of Defence Conference had discussed how to improve military performance in peacekeeping on the ground; the comprehensive review of peace operations had yielded a number of bold and ambitious recommendations, outlined in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people (A/70/95-S/2015/446); the Secretary-General had issued his report on the future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682); major reviews of the peacebuilding architecture and women, peace and security had been conducted; and pledges of some 40,000 troops for current and future peacekeeping deployments had been made at the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping held in September 2015. Despite those efforts, millions of innocent people were still being dragged into new or recurring armed conflicts, while those displaced from their homes by violence were suffering in exile, not knowing when they would return.

50. Against that backdrop, there was a need to build common understanding and sustainable momentum for the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General and of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. To that end, the Republic of Korea had organized a conference in New York in July 2015 and an expert meeting in Seoul in October 2015; it planned to hold a follow-up international conference in New York in early 2016. His delegation also hoped to continue holistic discussions on those recommendations in the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and to contribute to building political momentum for their implementation.

51. With regard to capability management and readiness enhancement, while most of the current capability gaps had been filled or reduced, it should be

recalled that, in 2014, a number of missions — including the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in the face of the Ebola outbreak — had been struggling to meet tremendous needs in the field. Experience had shown that new or renewed crises could strike at any time and in any place. Force generation, the management of capabilities and pledges, upgrading performance standards and readiness in times of peace were all essential for improving preparation for and response to future conflicts. His delegation welcomed the recent capability management enhancements made by the Secretariat in establishing the Strategic Force Generation and Capability Planning Cell, developing the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System that had replaced the United Nations Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS), and strengthening the Office for the Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership through outreach to Member States. The Republic of Korea had made three major pledges at the Leaders' Summit, including a commitment to provide an additional engineering unit to assist in reconstruction and humanitarian activities in conflict zones.

52. Partnership with regional organizations and actors must be strengthened. Given the intertwined, complex nature of contemporary challenges, the United Nations should forge more coherent, effective partnerships at all levels and take decisive steps to strengthen regional peace and security architectures. Regional organizations, especially the African Union, were becoming more prominent in the global security context because of their unique comparative advantages. It was worth exploring the High-level Independent Panel's recommendation that the Organization should provide enabling support to African Union peace support operations, including through more predictable financing. To that end, the Republic of Korea had pledged to provide deployable level-two hospital equipment through the African Union to enhance peacekeeping capacity in Africa.

53. Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal) said that his Government attached great importance to United Nations peacekeeping operations, to which it had been contributing for 57 years. Since the first deployment in 1948, the scope of United Nations peacekeeping operations had evolved and significantly expanded. Moreover, peacekeeping missions increasingly operated in diverse, challenging, and often hostile environments in ever more uncertain and volatile

political situations, and were required to interface with a complex set of actors. That trend had highlighted the critical issues of host country sovereignty and consent, the protection of civilians and the building of national capacity. Consequently, peacekeeping had become a multidimensional, multifaceted enterprise, with new and complex mandates and provisions. Yet, in most cases, the achievements of peacekeeping operations fell far short of desired outcomes.

54. In that context, his delegation commended the Secretary-General for convening the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, which had produced comprehensive and practical recommendations. In view of the results of the limited implementation of the Brahimi recommendations, and drawing lessons from other best practices, his delegation considered that a thorough examination of the Panel's report and the related report of the Secretary-General was necessary to optimize and maximize the results of implementation of their recommendations.

55. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations was the sole intergovernmental body mandated to conduct official reviews of United Nations peacekeeping operations. A holistic approach to international peace and security, through the United Nations peace architecture, should involve a balanced combination of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding. Due emphasis should be placed on what could be done in the area of prevention by implementing underutilized Charter provisions and enhancing the resources and capability of the Secretariat for that purpose. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the appointment of co-chairs to facilitate the intergovernmental negotiations on the review of the peacebuilding architecture and looked forward to engaging in that process. Those efforts must also be considered and implemented together with the new development agenda as a long-term sustainable preventive mechanism.

56. To date, Nepal had provided over 120,000 peacekeepers in 42 different missions around the world; 70 of them had lost their lives in the cause of international peace and security. Nepal had deployed its two contingents in UNMISS and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and had also provided niche capabilities such as an explosives ordinance disposal company, military police teams and

special force contingents in a number of other United Nations missions throughout Africa. Nepalese personnel currently served in 15 missions: with 5,199 male and 169 female troops deployed, it was the sixth largest troop-contributing country. Despite the difficulties it had encountered as a landlocked and least developed country in switching from UNSAS, Nepal had welcomed the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System as the sole access point for peacekeeping pledges and commitments and had placed all its pledges in that new system for review. It expected transparency and fairness in the implementation of the system. Nepal was also prepared to assist fellow troop-contributing countries in predeployment and other specialized training courses, in particular through its peacekeeping training centre, which it planned to develop into a regional centre of excellence.

57. Nepal was committed to increasing the number of women in its army and police forces and to deploying more women for peacekeeping, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other related resolutions, which it was implementing through a dedicated national action plan. The predeployment training courses it provided to troops focused strongly on the protection of civilians and in particular, the protection of women and girls from sexual violence during and after conflict; extensive training was also provided on United Nations policies regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, and the protection of human rights. Nepal enforced a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and fully supported the Secretary-General's approach in that regard.

58. By its very nature, peacekeeping was, and must remain, a shared responsibility between the General Assembly, the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries, regional and subregional organizations, the host country, and the United Nations Secretariat. Early engagement and consultation in drafting mission mandates and exit strategies made missions more effective. Mission mandates must reflect realities on the ground and be responsive to changing conditions. Mandates must also respect the basic principles of United Nations peacekeeping, namely the consent of the parties, impartiality, and use of force only in self-defence or in defence of the mandate. The increasing incidence of attacks against peacekeeping personnel was a matter of grave concern. Their safety and security were the responsibility of the United Nations and must be given the highest priority. Similarly, their immunity should not be arbitrarily waived, in a non-transparent manner, and without prior consultation with the sending Government.

59. Mr. Akhtaruzzaman (Bangladesh) said that, as one of the leading troop- and police-contributing countries, Bangladesh had a vital stake in the effectiveness of peace operations. Recognizing that the range and context of peacekeeping were rapidly changing, it had constantly updated its deployment capabilities and had demonstrated its capacity to deploy at very short notice to high-risk, complex missions. It acknowledged the need to improve rapid deployment and force generation in start-up missions, and to ensure stronger protection of civilians, and stood ready to contribute in those areas.

60. Aware of the need to modernize the technologies used by peacekeepers, his country had established the state-of-the-art Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training, which was being developed as a centre of excellence for training Bangladeshi peacekeepers and for providing customized training, joint exercises and technical support for other troop- and police-contributing countries. Bangladesh promoted training in the protection of civilians, gender and human right issues and language skills and strongly advocated a zero tolerance policy with regard to sexual misconduct by peacekeepers.

61. His delegation had supported actions to give effect to the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel and was willing to engage further on the constructive ideas put forward in the Secretary-General's report. The pledges of infantry, formed police units and enablers, including utility helicopters, made by his Government at the last Leaders' Summit reflected its continued commitment to and full support for United Nations peacekeeping. Bangladesh had been one of the first countries to register its pledges through the newly introduced Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System.

62. His delegation welcomed the fact that peacekeeping operations had improved and were being managed more seriously than ever before. In order to achieve sustainable peace, stability and security, it was vital to create a mindset of tolerance and mutual respect irrespective of ethnic, social or religious differences. Bangladesh was confident that if more resources were committed to that end a more peaceful world could be achieved.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.



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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bowler (Malawi)

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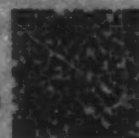
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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the recent attacks in Beirut and Paris

1. The Chair, on behalf of all the members of the Committee, expressed sympathy to the peoples and Governments of Lebanon and France in connection with the recent attacks in their respective capital cities.

Agenda item 54: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(continued) (A/C.4/70/L.15, A/C.4/70/L.16, A/C.4/70/L.17 and A/C.4/70/L.18)

2. Mr. Anshor (Indonesia), introducing the four draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 54 (A/C.4/70/L.15, A/C.4/70/L.16, A/C.4/70/L.17 and A/C.4/70/L.18) and reviewing their provisions, said that they reflected fundamental principles and positions regarding the rights of Palestine refugees and the international community's commitment to alleviating their plight until a just solution was achieved, as well as its strong support for the humanitarian work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was making a vital contribution towards regional stability and efforts to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He expressed the hope that all the draft resolutions would again receive the overwhelming support of the Committee.

3. The Chair said that the draft resolutions under agenda item 54 had no programme budget implications.

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.15: Assistance to Palestine refugees

4. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Brazil, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

5. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize,

Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Paraguay, United States of America.

6. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.15 was adopted by 158 votes to 1, with 10 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.16: Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

7. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Malaysia, Maldives, Mali and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

8. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Madagascar, Paraguay.

9. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.16 was adopted by 157 votes to 7, with 6 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.17: Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

10. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Malaysia, Maldives, Mali and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

11. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra

Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Nauru, Paraguay.

12. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.17 was adopted by 158 votes to 6, with 6 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.18: Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues

13. **Ms. Elliott** (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Brazil, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

14. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia,

Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Paraguay.

15. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.18 was adopted by 157 votes to 7, with 6 abstentions.*

Agenda item 55: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (continued) (A/C.4/70/L.19, A/C.4/70/L.20, A/C.4/70/L.21, A/C.4/70/L.22 and A/C.4/70/L.23)

16. **Mr. León González** (Cuba), introducing the five draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 55 (A/C.4/70/L.19, A/C.4/70/L.20, A/C.4/70/L.21, A/C.4/70/L.22 and A/C.4/70/L.23) and reviewing their provisions, said that the extent of Israel's systematic violations of human rights and international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian

Golan had continued to worsen during the reporting period. Israel continued its policy of systematic aggression, provocation and collective punishment, which caused widespread suffering among the Palestinian population and further destabilized the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel was blatantly failing to comply with its legal obligations as an occupying Power in accordance with international law. Its illegal settlement campaign, which included land confiscation and appropriation of natural resources, was fragmenting the Palestinian territory and severely undermining the possibility of achieving a two-State solution. Such actions, compounded by the issue of impunity for settler violence, were to blame for the exponential rise in attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and constituted the main obstacle to peace. As described in the reports, Gaza was in the grip of a critical humanitarian situation, particularly as a result of the slow pace of reconstruction following the most recent Israeli military assault on the territory. He expressed the hope that Member States would stand firmly behind such crucial draft resolutions in view of the need for collective efforts to defend the principles of international law and reach a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict.

17. Mr. de Jesús Martínez (Panama) expressed his Government's solidarity with and condolences to the Governments and peoples of France and Lebanon for the recent attacks perpetrated in their respective countries. Panama vigorously condemned all acts of violence and called on all civilized countries to work together to bring an end to such barbarity and ensure strict compliance with international law, which formed the bedrock of peace and security.

18. Speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, he said that his Government's position on the issues addressed in draft resolutions A/C.4/70/L.21 and A/C.4/70/L.22 had evolved over the last few years, passing through all three potential voting options. His country based its foreign policy on working for the common good through dialogue and consensus; its evolving position reflected its endeavours to strike a delicate balance between the different views, with full respect for human rights and support for the legitimate aspiration of Israel to live in peace within secure borders. Many resolutions under discussion at the current session of the General Assembly referred, either directly or indirectly, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and expressed criticism of Israel. His Government shared the

near-universal view that Israel would enjoy lasting peace with Palestine and its other neighbours only if a two-State solution was achieved, if mistrust and violence were replaced with dialogue and negotiation and if the legitimate aspirations of all peoples, including that of the Palestinian people to self-determination, were recognized. Panama therefore called on Israel and Palestine to reach an agreement that would result in coexistence between the Jewish State of Israel and the State of Palestine, including concrete measures to facilitate resolution of the conflict. Lasting peace could be achieved only through a political process.

19. The Chair said that the draft resolutions under agenda item 55 had no programme budget implications.

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.19: Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

20. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Guinea, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

21. A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Gabon, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Panama, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay.

22. Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.19 was adopted by 84 votes to 9, with 74 abstentions.

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.20: Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories

23. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Guinea, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

24. A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Australia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Paraguay, Togo.

25. Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.20 was adopted by 156 votes to 6, with 7 abstentions.

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.21: Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan

26. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Norway, Switzerland and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

27. *A recorded vote was taken.**In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Australia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Madagascar, Paraguay, Togo.

28. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.21 was adopted by 154 votes to 7, with 8 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.22: Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

29. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Guinea, Malaysia, Mali and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

30. *A recorded vote was taken.**In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan,

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Honduras, Madagascar, Malawi, Paraguay, Togo.

31. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.22 was adopted by 151 votes to 8, with 9 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.23: The occupied Syrian Golan

32. Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Malaysia had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

33. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea,

Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Madagascar, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Paraguay, Togo, Tonga, United States of America.

34. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.23 was adopted by 156 votes to 1, with 14 abstentions.*

35. Mr. Maes (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that while the European Union member States had followed a coordinated voting pattern on the draft resolutions just adopted, the European Union as a whole had not adopted a legal definition of the term "forced displacement", which was used in some of the draft resolutions. Furthermore, the use of the term "Palestine" could not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and was without prejudice to the individual positions of member States on the issue and, therefore, to the question of the validity of Palestine's accession to the international instruments referred to in the draft resolutions.

36. Some of the draft resolutions just adopted also referred to the ongoing tensions regarding the holy places in Jerusalem. The European Union was concerned about the worrying developments and recurrent violent clashes at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Fully acknowledging the special role of Jordan as custodian of the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, the European Union welcomed the understandings that had been reached between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority in October 2015 and called for

the full implementation of the previous understandings reached in October 2014.

37. Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Committee's adoption of the draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 54 and 55 resoundingly reaffirmed the rights of the Palestinian people, including Palestine refugees; the imperative of respect for humanitarian and human rights law; and the fundamental legal principles relevant to the core issues and the search for a just, comprehensive, lasting and peaceful solution, which, regrettably, remained elusive in the light of Israel's ongoing violations and intransigence. The action just taken by the Committee exemplified the role that the United Nations could and must play in safeguarding human rights and upholding international law.

38. Her delegation was grateful for the principled support of Member States, host countries and the donor community to UNRWA, particularly in the light of the unprecedented financial crisis it had faced. The Agency's humanitarian work and emergency assistance were vital for the survival of Palestine refugees and helped to promote regional stability.

39. Her delegation also appreciated the support expressed for the mandate of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and for its efforts to raise international awareness of the systematic human rights violations perpetrated under the 48-year Israeli military occupation. It stressed the importance of reaffirming the international consensus on the Fourth Geneva Convention's applicability to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and on the illegality of the Israeli settlement campaign and other grave breaches that were sabotaging what little opportunity remained for achieving peace under the two-State solution.

40. Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the overwhelming support for the draft resolutions just adopted under agenda items 54 and 55 sent an unambiguous message to Israel to end its occupation of all the occupied Arab territories and to cease immediately all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. As illustrated by the vote on the draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/C.4/70/L.23), Israel's attempt to annex the Syrian Golan was null and void and without

international legal effect. The Syrian Arab Republic reserved the right to fully reclaim the territory by all legal means under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. In further aggravation of its brazen crime of annexation, Israel was bringing settlers to the occupied Syrian Golan in droves by offering them generous financial incentives, in addition to exploiting natural resources and arresting large numbers of Syrian citizens in the territory, including the Syrian Mandela, Sidqi al-Maqt, who had already spent over 27 years in Israeli jails.

41. Israel was the only State to have voted against the draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan and had voted against the entire set of draft resolutions under agenda items 54 and 55, demonstrating its blatant disregard for international consensus, the United Nations and international law. Such political isolation of Israel served as punishment for its continued occupation of the Syrian Golan. The Syrian delegation appealed to those few delegations that had abstained from voting on the draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan to join the international consensus and vote in favour when it came before the plenary Assembly. Any hesitation to condemn occupation and forced annexation would send a dangerous signal to lawbreakers such as Israel, suggesting that they could do as they pleased and that the law of the jungle had replaced the law.

Agenda item 120: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (continued) (A/C.4/70/L.11)

Draft decision A/C.4/70/L.11: Proposed programme of work and timetable of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) for the seventy-first session of the General Assembly

42. *Draft decision A/C.4/70/L.11 was adopted.*

Completion of the Committee's work

43. The Chair declared that the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) had completed its work for the main part of the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.